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Language Classes as Acts of Citizenship

PhD Thesis

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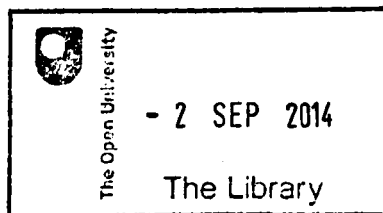
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Abstract



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This thesis is about the possibility of political transformation from the margins through language and language classes in the context of citizenship management, migration controls and exclusionary language policies in the European Union.

To enquire into this argument, the thesis analyses the work of three different language classes projects in the UK, Germany and Spain, which, amongst other practices, teach the language to undocumented migrants and foster political mobilisation for their rights. By means of challenging exclusionary logics and dualisms, and pursuing a dialogic analysis of language and politics from the margins through understanding citizenship as enactment, this thesis reworks the relationship between language, agency, and political transformation in the context of restrictive use of language tests and classes, making it possible to understand the transformative capacity of the practice of language classes.

This work argues that language functions as site in which citizenship as exclusionary can be reproduced (e.g. through language tests for accessing citizenship), but also as a site for dialogue, interaction and political organising for claiming one's rights, and for the transformation of citizenship as we know it. The possibility of engendering new political subjectivities and transformation from the margins through enhancing dialogue makes of any language class, official or not, a potential site of transformative citizenship.

The work of the projects analysed demonstrates how, through language and language classes, migrants who are excluded from citizenship and the realm of the political actually may engage in enacting, disrupting and transforming citizenship. Whilst it

recognises the unpredictability of language and its possible oppressive effects, this thesis ultimately reads these language classes and some of their practices and actions as fragile but nevertheless transformative 'acts of citizenship' from the margins.

Acknowledgements

Sitting on Lida Perin's beautiful terrace in the tepid Berlin sun, I have to exercise my breathing, thinking of the teaching of Marie Bonillo, my great Yoga-Pilates teacher, in order to calm down my nerves, for finally I am doing what I have been dreaming to for a long time: thanking you all for having accompanied, supported, helped, encouraged, made fun of and believed in me in this terrifying process which is writing a PhD!

Over the past few weeks I could not help thinking about the moment I would start writing this: whilst attempting to write the real thing, under the shower, on the toilet, and whilst trying (and failing) to fall asleep. Boy, I could not wait!

I am now moved and emotional while I am realising that I could easily end up writing another 200 pages, so many of you have been close and wonderful to me in the past (yes, I know, I took my time) four years.

Given that, after all, I seem to have managed to write a PhD, I must start by thanking the person who most believed in me and pushed me to carry on, go back to, and be myself in this loved (less) and hated (more) world which is Academia. Without her, not only would I surely not be writing this, but I would also not have lived the life I have: I would not have met Silvia Magnano, my tormented first love in the Madrid NOISE Women Studies Summer School of 2001; would not have ever moved to London in 2004 to do my Masters with Nira Yuval-Davis; and would not have started working with

the ENACT project in 2009, where the most empathetic, clever and sweet 'boss' I would have ever wished to have, Engin Isin, introduced me to a new way of thinking politics, and to my wonderful supervisors-to-be, Claudia Aradau, Jef Huysmans and Raia Prokhovnik. Rutvica Andrijasevic had to bear with all my cries against Academia, all my 'never agains' and 'bum this', and, imperturbable as she is, she throughout believed in me and praised my capacities and work. I admit I still wonder why, but will never be thankful enough!

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P.G. Macioti, Berlin 14th October 2013

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*To Tutu, Tiz and Dana, three amazing fighters, who with their strength have
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Introduction

One can think of language in many ways. Generally speaking, including body languages and not referring to any particular national one, language is what realises communication, expression, sociality, interaction, bonding, violent and non-violent confrontations, collective processes, and politics. Language comprises an utterly and complexly wide spectrum of acts, effects, usages and aims. While this thesis touches upon a few of these, its subject matter is the manyfold interplays between language and politics in the specific context of citizenship and migration in the EU. Language is for this purpose understood and dealt with both as a metaphor for what holds specific repercussions on society, politics and social order, and as literal, hierarchically ordered national, as well as minority or unacknowledged languages.¹

In the current context of migration and the subsequent restructuring of citizenship, in the EU, as in most western countries, official national language acquired a renewed and complex role in relation to the redefinition of citizenship. The vast majority of non-EU migrants are required to pass language tests to even enter specific EU countries for the purpose of migrating (i.e. Germany, the Netherlands, UK, Denmark, France and Luxembourg); to pass these to gain long-term residence (in Austria, the Czech Republic,

¹ In French, Spanish and Italian (and very likely in many more national languages than I am knowledgeable of) there is a distinction between Language (respectively *Langage*, *Lenguaje* and *Linguaggio*) and language(s) (respectively *Langue*, *Lengua* and *Lingua*). The former metaphorically means language as what allows for expression and communication: i.e. language per se, in its manyfold power, work, function and symbolism; the latter being the grammatical structures, and the system of signs that make each language the more or less official means of communication. I use the English word 'language' interchangeably to indicate one or the other, but this will either become clear by the context or explicitly pointed out.

Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands); to attend and pass specific language classes and tests to get residence permits and citizenship rights (in Germany, Austria, Denmark, France, Finland, Lithuania, Slovak Republic); and to pass language tests or interview assessment to access citizenship rights in most other EU countries (with the exception of Italy, Spain, Sweden and Belgium) (Bocker & Strik, 2011, p. 157; Extramiana, 2011, p. 10). This process is being criticised as controlling, filtering and restricting migration, while it is backed by beliefs and discourses on the necessary nexus between good language knowledge and social cohesion and integration of migrants into society (Spotti & Van Avermaet, 2009; Van Oers, 2010). Moreover, it has been argued that the official national language tested and taught has been the product of political processes, which saw the correctness of specific languages as being defined by the ruling and dominant classes, and by market unifications (Bourdieu, 1991). In this respect, a system of compulsory testing (and teaching) would necessarily favour already advantaged migrants (by class and/or educational background) as opposed to illiterate migrants from lower class backgrounds.

Official language can be therefore seen as an instrument for the reproduction of the political power of the dominant over the oppressed (Bourdieu, 1991). Moreover, language policies on migration such as obligatory language tests and classes indicate how language works as a site of citizenship as membership, through managing inclusion or exclusion.

However, it is also through language that claims to rights, collective mobilisation and politics mainly occur: through the expression and articulation of ones' voices, claims and revindications political and social change takes place which allows oppressed groups to defy their oppression. At this stage the question arises of whether language teaching and knowledge, once acquired, can be possibly transformative, or if it will

necessarily reproduce authorized projects of integration and exclusion.

I am interested less in how language empowers individuals than in the politics that are enacted through language and language classes. Empowerment refers to the individual's capacity to be included in society by taking on the opportunity structures given by it. The politics of language and the possibility for transformation refer to the capacity to change society by challenging the opportunities provided by its current order, for example by acquiring rights for undocumented migrants.

This thesis is dedicated to the analysis, the problematisation and ultimately the defiance of a binary understanding of language (which is present both within a specific, national language and within language as metaphorical concept) in relation to politics and to citizenship, that is, as either oppressive or transformative.

Politics is here understood not merely as the political processes happening at governmental and representative level, but rather, and in particular, as the mobilisation of subjects formally excluded from citizenship, and from the officially recognised realm of the political (Isin, 2002). I intend to precisely enquire into the role of language in the political becoming of subjects who are actively excluded from rights and citizenship, but who resist and undermine such exclusion, and in so doing the concept of citizenship itself. I am interested in going beyond an understanding of citizenship as membership ruled by inclusion/exclusion, in order to see whether and how language can also be a site of citizenship as transformation. In this sense, transformative politics not only refers to big-scale, revolutionary transformation of social order. This thesis is less about big-scale transformation by revolutionary subjects, and more about showing how smaller-scale, unacknowledged sites of mobilisation and resistance by unlikely subjects operate through language and how their existence is fundamental for the very possibility of thinking citizenship as political subjectivity beyond binary terms. In other words: the thesis is about the relationship between language, agency and political transformation *from the margins*.

I use the case of language classes, both official and alternative, to study these question about the politics of language from the margins. Language classes are a particular site where exclusion, empowerment and transformation are shaped through both the languages taught and their pedagogical practices. More specifically, I will start from existing critiques of language policies in the EU, looking in particular at three countries, the UK, Germany and Spain, which constitute a non-representative, similar yet diverse spectrum of modes of managing national identity and migrant's access to the status of citizens. Expanding on the existing literature, I will analyse the pedagogical and political role of official language classes for migrants, introducing three examples for what I call 'alternative language classes': one grassroots sex workers' project based in London, UK which teaches English and organises for migrants' sex workers rights – 'x:talk'; one state-accredited, but alternative in practice German language school – 'Worldword'²; and one other grassroots organisation, part of a wider network of similar projects in Spain, which organises for the rights of undocumented migrants in Madrid, and between 2006 and 2013 ran Spanish classes for migrant street-sellers – 'Asociación de Sin Papeles'³ (hereafter at times referred to as ASP). All of these three projects teach the national language whilst being aware of the political power of language per se, and at the same time either directly organise (as in x:talk and ASP) or possibly facilitate (Worldword) political mobilisation for migrants rights and other transformative struggles. For all three projects, language seems to also function for and together with the possibility of acting politically, rather than only as a governmental device for integration and exclusion.

² Worldword is an anonymising name. Because of the specific nature of the details and information present in this thesis, to be identified by the authorities could be seriously damaging for the school's official accreditation. For the same reason its exact location in Germany will also be omitted. The other two projects are political organisations completely independent from the authorities, whose names do not need to be changed.

³ In English: Association of (People) without Papers (my translation).

On the theoretical level, the thesis will dissect the possibility of politics and agency through language, treasuring the contributions to the analysis of the reproductive and oppressive role of official language provided by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1991); together with the theorisation of resignification and unauthorised political disruption through failures in language and discourse of Judith Butler (Butler, 1997); and the dialogical, multiple and open-ended understanding of language of Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981). In order to enquire about agency and political change from the margins through language, these theories will be complemented with Engin Isin's theoretical work on acts of citizenship (Isin & Nielsen, 2008), which will add a primal lens through which to read the specific politicality of the projects analysed, whilst being integrated by an understanding of language and dialogue as inherent and fundamental to the political enactment and transformation of citizenship. The very meaning and concept of citizenship will be consequently analysed and taken apart, opening up the possibility for reading it as unfixed terrain of struggle where outsiders become actors of citizenship through claiming their rights, rather than as a status or practice accessible only to members (Isin, 2009, 2012; Isin & Nielsen, 2008). One main contribution that this research seeks to provide is to make sense of the politics of these projects in order to offer a new understanding of the relationship between political subjectivity, language as dialogue, and citizenship. Showing how citizenship is about disruption, and showing how such disruption takes place, through dialogue, from the margins, rather than through a struggle for inclusion, will lead to a renewed understanding of citizenship itself as political subjectivity, rather than as membership to be accessed or excluded from through language tests.

Contextualising the choice of topic

During my own involvement in x:talk as co-organisier, teacher and teaching assistant between 2006 and 2013, I soon realised the important nexus between language and politics, both in its oppressive and in its enabling, possibly transformative sides. As I will set out throughout the thesis, x:talk teaches a specific language, related to sex work, and runs classes that do not set any further restriction to access than working as a sex worker, while organising together with migrant and non-migrant sex workers against the criminalisation of sex work and migration. My experience within x:talk was the starting point from which I began reflecting on the lack of opportunities for many migrants to access language classes; on the way official language is used as a filter; on how to teach without reproducing hierarchies of knowledge between students and teacher; and on the exact role of language and communication for transformative politics from marginalised, stigmatised positions. The choice to write this PhD was driven by a commitment to political change from the margins and by the need to answer questions that arose from my own experience as a teacher and activist in x:talk.

x:talk was created in 2006, set up by a small group of sex workers and allies, out of the strongly felt importance of communicating with each other in order to organise for our rights, rather than helping the less advantaged, hence reproducing hierarchical dynamics of rescue (Agustín, 2007). Before teaching the first course in 2007, I obtained a CELTA⁴ teaching qualification. Applying what I had learnt to a class that aimed at sharing language knowledge in order to work in the sex industry in easier, better and safer conditions, to negotiate with clients and bosses and to organise with colleagues at work was not easy. I soon realised that the language teaching model I was taught was constructed as top down and was aimed at teaching the official language, rather than a

⁴ Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults.

language of rights. Trying to change this, with the valuable contribution of other x:talk organisers and teachers I designed an alternative curriculum and attempted to use as much participatory method as possible. After all, the aim was to organise politically together with the students, not for 'us' to empower 'them' with official language knowledge.

Throughout the first three or four years of x:talk, a few issues arising in the classes led me to reflect on whether it was possible to organise politically in a transformative way through language, although some students had become x:talk organisers and teaching assistants. For instance, many students would ask for grammar and to be taught the traditional way, and against my wish I often did so. Many also would love the accent of the only native British assistant in class. And then I wondered: is it possible to avoid and challenge the power of dominant and official language?

On one other occasion, when I was assisting a class taught by another sex worker in 2009, something in me felt very uncomfortable hearing her explaining the meaning of 'to have to' with the following example: 'you *have to* do what the government tells you to do'. We were in a class where the majority of the students would have not been present, had they done what the government tells non-EU migrants without papers to do, let alone that, as sex workers, none would have been there if really complying with the government laws which criminalise many aspects of the sex industry. Apart from triggering discussion on the politicality of language and on teaching ethics that resulted in a written document (x:talk, 2013), this episode made me realise even further the utterly political character of language and of language teaching, and left me wanting to do research into the oppressive nature of dominant language, into radical pedagogies, into the contents of official classes, and finally into ways of understanding the possibility for marginalised groups to mobilise and to become political subjects through

language. Whilst embarking on the search for answers within existing theoretical scholarship, I also decided to both look into the materials used in official classes in the UK and Germany, and to search for similar projects to x:talk, finding interesting, close yet different examples in Worldword and ASP.

My research is therefore informed from the very start by the political and practical need to answer crucial questions for conceiving of the possibility for political transformation, based on my own, concrete experiences in migrant sex workers rights activism. In order to provide answers, this work will revisit literature and theories on language, citizenship and political agency with a particular attention not to reproduce existing dualisms and analyses of language and of citizenship as either oppressive and exclusionary or inclusive and empowering. A constant dialogue will be maintained between the groups that form the empirical part of the thesis and the theoretical frameworks explored, as my first rejection of dualisms stems from the experience, with x:talk, of both oppressive workings of language *and* of transformative alliances stemming from it.

Together with, and necessarily connected to a non-dualistic analysis of language, citizenship and transformation from the margin, this work will offer a nuanced and new way of understanding language classes, both official and alternative, as possible sites of reproduction and transformation of citizenship, and to interpret a variety of different expressions of the work of x:talk, ASP and Worldword as dynamic, dialogical and fragile acts of citizenship.

With the present research, I intend to contribute to the body of work that analyses citizenship as enactment from the margins, in order to challenge scripted and dominant understandings of politics and citizenship as being exclusive domain of the status-holding citizen.

Before mentioning the methodological path that I followed through the research and

then giving a description of each of its chapters, I will introduce the theoretical development through the aid of the four central themes that inform and drive my work and express its contribution to my understanding of language classes and transformative practices from the margins. The first theme is exclusion. It looks at how language and language classes and tests are connected to exclusionary processes. The second theme is 'challenging dualism'. Under this heading I develop the limits of dualistic approaches to language and to citizenship. The third theme that runs through the chapters is 'dialogism'. To explore how language can overcome dualisms, I explore language and language classes as dialogical. This leads me to the final theme of transformative enactment of language and citizenship. This theme brings out how language classes, through dialogue, can and do become acts and sites of transformative citizenship from the margins. Needless to say the four themes are strongly interconnected.

The exclusionary logics

The first chapter of this thesis deals with the critique of the language testing system for naturalisation in the EU. The way in which governments deploy specific mechanisms of exclusion in order to manage, control and restrict the access of certain migrants to citizenship, to sociality and to rights in general, will be a central and recurrent theme. As I will explain more in detail, language tests cannot be understood as means to foster integration, since they automatically set up a filter between illiterate or less (western) educated, poorer migrants and privileged migrants from western educated backgrounds, or with major economic resources to afford the necessary preparation and exam fee. If governments saw language knowledge as a means of fostering migrants' well being and integration, they would focus more on promoting access to language classes, rather than on testing them. Furthermore, the very content of the tests and the belief in their

objectivity are arbitrary, nationally biased and serve as yet a further barrier to accessing full rights in the country one lives in (McNamara & Shohamy, 2008; Shohamy & McNamara, 2009). In Chapter one, naturalisation (or entry and residence) language tests will be read as being a clear example of the long standing logics that construct citizenship as membership within a political community which is constituted in opposition to those who are excluded – in the case of EU citizenship: equal rights for EU citizens as set against the exclusion of non-EU ones.

Exclusion from rights and from accessing the means to get them will also be thematised when dealing with the existing modes of national language teaching, with radical and critical pedagogies and with issues of access to language classes in the second and third chapters. These chapters will highlight how the language taught in official classes reproduces and legitimises exclusions by teaching and conveying judgements on who is allowed to be in the country and who is not, or by omitting the language needed by workers in the informal industries such as sex workers or street sellers. Radical pedagogies of language teaching will be problematised in terms of how some of the projects following such radical methods still fail to thematise and question the lack of access to their classes for non-documented migrants, i.e. their exclusion.

When reviewing the provision of language classes in the three EU countries considered in this work, and their accessibility to different status migrants, it will also become obvious that in the vast majority of cases non-documented migrants are purposely excluded from accessing official language classes. It is also as a reaction to this exclusion that alternative language classes open to undocumented migrants are set up, which strive to provide access for the latter and not to reproduce exclusionary language (which does not always succeed).

On a more strictly theoretical level, I will explore how the logics of exclusion that lie

behind the construction of mainstream citizenship and political models are reflected in political philosophers' theories on agency and the power of language. In Chapter 4, Bourdieu's understanding of official language as deeply entrenched in the dominant doxa (the assumed, invisible and given representations of the social world whose arbitrariness is concealed) will be analysed, together with the author's contraposition of orthodoxa (the conservative discourses that seek to maintain social order and dominant doxa but in so doing make the latter visible), to heterodoxa (alternative, instituted representations of the social world which challenge the uniqueness of doxa and are the motor for social change) (Bourdieu, 1977). In Bourdieu's terms, subordinated groups whose domination is assured through doxa and orthodoxa benefit from political agency only once they become acknowledgeable as instituted groups that express alternative (heterodoxic) representations of social reality. A group can only bring about change when it gains acknowledgment and recognition (authorisation) as instituted (Bourdieu, 1991). In other words, subordinated groups remain excluded from the political until their constitution as subjects is authorised, seen and accepted, i.e. until they become included in the realm of the doxa (or of politics, traditionally speaking). Chapter 4 addresses the implication of Bourdieu's framework for the theorisation of agency through language. I am introducing here my reading of his theory in order to disclose how it also rests on a dualistic view of inclusion/exclusion from the political. Saying that groups have to be recognised as instituted within the doxa to be able to articulate claims implies that agency from the margins is dependent on authorisation into the already set terms of the doxa, which in turn suggests that the political struggle for change is a struggle of the excluded to be included in the political field as it is institutionally defined.

As I mentioned above, exclusionary mechanisms are central to the management and governance of citizenship and migration. Discussing Bourdieu's view of possible

political change means to open up the question of what political action can be taken to counter such exclusion. Does one need to struggle for inclusion into citizenship? Or inclusion into existing language classes? And finally, is the struggle for political change a struggle for inclusion into the understandable, authorised and powerful terms set by and through language?

This is a set of central questions that this work will address and indicate an answer to. In Chapter 5, drawing on Engin Isin's work 'Being Political' (Isin, 2002), I will challenge a view of politics and citizenship that reconfirms and avows the logic of exclusion by accepting it as a given.

The existence of mechanisms of exclusion, and the way in which the construction of citizenship and of the dominant understanding of the political as the realm of the citizen-member in opposition to outsiders or aliens are thematised throughout the thesis. Isin poses a very powerful critique of theoretical-political processes that simply unveil and condemn exclusion without questioning its logics (Isin, 2002). Although it is necessary to unveil and condemn, the relegation of marginal groups to the category of the excluded fixes their belonging to such categories and hides the political agency and active engagement and struggles of outsiders and aliens in the very making of citizenship, what will be understood as their enactment of citizenship. While exclusion is accounted for, it is not to be seen as impermeable or as always successful. In this work there are indications of its failure and of migrants' political agency through language, which challenge a view of citizenship as exclusive membership and rather show how it is enacted from the margins. Using Bourdieu's terminology, to unveil exclusion is to show doxa as constructed, but to change it is to account for the role of non-authorised subjects in the making of heterodoxa from the margins, instead of reading the latter as only generated by authorised, instituted, i.e. included groups.

The use of the concept of marginality or of transformation 'from the margins' in this thesis aims to reconceptualise what is constructed as lacking authority and attempted to be relegated to the outside, i.e. excluded, as what is actually present and relevant, always possibly interfering with and challenging the instituted order, not by inclusion in it but from its very position at the margins. In other words, I use marginality not as opposed to, or as always excluded from the centre, but rather as a positionality whose political relevance and agency shows and undermines the arbitrariness and impermeability of the centre, i.e. of the authorised political agent, the active, status holder and rights invested citizen. Moreover, transformation from the margins refers to an analysis which does not relegate transformative politics to big-scale revolutionary processes, but rather aims at showing how small-scale social change itself is crucial to undermine binary views of politics and to postulate the possibility of big-scale transformation itself.

To sum up, the exclusion from language classes and rights has to be analysed as an actual problem arising from the political organisation of citizenship around inclusion/exclusion.

Critiquing the dualistic analysis of citizenship and of the political in such terms will be central to this thesis in two different ways and stages. Through the first part of the thesis (Chapters 1-3) the planned structural exclusion of certain migrants from rights, resources and citizenship will be displayed and accounted for as a matter-of-fact governmental device. However, its implication for the analysis and understanding of the political and of the possibility of resistance and transformation from the margins will be scrutinised in the second part of the thesis, which will call into question the viability and the effectiveness of exclusion as interpretative model.

The challenge of the paradigm of inclusion/exclusion is clearly connected to the challenge of dualistic analyses altogether. It is crucial to this work as a whole to develop a non-binary analysis of politics, and therefore of language and citizenship. In this thesis I show how dualistic understandings of power and its counterpart normally lead back to simplistic and deterministic ways of making sense of agency and domination that do not lead to transformation. The next section will therefore be dedicated to spelling out and introducing the thesis' anti-binary work.

Challenging Dualisms

Those ever-recurrent binary divisions into good and bad, white and black, man and woman, are not only simplistic and ignore the vast number of nuances existing between each of the two poles. They are also a reflection of dangerous political moves that seek to fix and naturalise difference, and to validate and avail single-issue, universalising and therefore oppressive justifications of norm, truth and power. Hiding diversity means reconfirming dominant power relations that oppress by confining persons, processes and acts to one position and category or another, blind to the existence of manifold ways and expressions that challenge these dualistic divides. In other words, clearly defining one category as the opposite of another normalises, hinders and hides the possibility for change. The best example is the prescriptive gender division into men and women, which normalises heterosexuality and historically relegates 'woman' to the realm of the passive (Butler, 1999). Another complex but central example of the danger of dualistic thinking is the paradigm of inclusion/exclusion introduced above.

The challenge of dualisms will unfold to be one of the central themes and aims of this project. Indeed, moving beyond inclusion/exclusion will disclose possible new ways of

unravelling the politicality of marginalised subjects through language, challenging dominant, oppressive models of politics without setting an opposite answer to it that would limit and constrict the possibility of resistance and disruption to one strategy, that of inclusion. The danger of binary thinking lies indeed precisely in that, when naming oppression and domination, power is represented as monolithic, rather than as permeating in different and multiple ways all aspects of the social world. Connectedly, resistance to it will also be normalised as one, and it will therefore indirectly reaffirm and reproduce the validity of oppressive power by asking for inclusion into it. Opposites corroborate and constitute each other after all. In this respect, I would like to now draw attention to the recurrence of other dualisms (and my attempt to overcome these) throughout this research.

Different from, but connected to inclusion/exclusion is the dualism present in the work of Bourdieu analysed in Chapter 4. In relation to language and its power Bourdieu divides between orthodoxic language (which could be read as the national language taught in official language classes) and heterodoxic language (which could be in turn read as the language of rights taught in projects like x:talk, Worldword, and ASP). Such dualistic thinking would either not make sense of the fragility and impurities of the language taught in alternative language classes or dismiss it as non-authorised and therefore powerless and ineffective endeavour. In order to move beyond such a dualism, Chapter 4 will explore Butler's theory of language and performative power. Although Butler rejects the necessity of authorisation for conceiving of disruption and change through language, she still presents a rather singular view of language and its permeating power, and relegates the possibility of change to the very terms set by language, i.e. through the failures of its repetition. While Butler's theory does not reproduce Bourdieu's dualism, it proves limited in value for an analysis of collective political mobilisation from the margins, therefore also risking relegating agency to the

albeit unpredictable working of language. A way out of the dualism between official language as orthodoxic, i.e. oppressive and instrument of maintenance of dominant power and social order and a viable language of resistance will be found in the multilingualism of Bakhtin, who argues that language, both in its metaphorical and in its concrete senses, is multiple and internally diverse through the concepts of polyglossia (which indicate the existence of more than one language) and heteroglossia (which indicates the internal multiplicity of each language). This understanding will pave the way to make sense of the power of language in both official and alternative language classes without having to dualistically distinguish between a dominant language and a transformative one.

Another important binary, which will be challenged in Chapters 5 and 6, is the one between citizenship as domination and citizenship as empowerment. Citizenship has been at the centre of extensive scholarly research and theory production, which have generally portrayed it as either expression of social movements, or of ruling class strategy of oppression of dominated classes (Isin, 2009; Isin & Turner, 2002; Mann, 1987; Turner, 1993). This thesis will attempt to think thorough citizenship as both expression of agency and instrument of oppression, beyond a binary understanding of it as one or the other. It is again the work of Isin, which will provide the tools to work beyond this dualism, by introducing the idea of citizenship as enactment, rather than as status or practice. Indeed, rather than seeing citizenship as membership to be gained or excluded from, Isin understands specific moments, events, happenings in which outsiders or non-status holders claim their right to hold rights as moments in which citizenship is enacted and transformed, through what he calls 'acts of citizenship'. If citizenship is not merely a status conveying power, but also a terrain of struggle, then it is neither to be seen as empowering per se, through inclusion in it, nor as oppressive for its exclusiveness.

This step leads us to the last dualism that will be tackled in this project: the one between language classes (both official and alternative) as sites of either transformation or reproduction of citizenship as membership. The understanding of citizenship as enacted from the margins will indeed bring to light the sites from which such transformation and disruption of citizenship take place, that is, sites of citizenship. Following from the reading of language itself as a site of citizenship established in Chapter 5, Chapter 6 will present the reading and understanding of both official and alternative language classes in this light. Analysing the possibility for disruption and transformation, thus of the possibility of engaging in acts of citizenship through and with language, the last chapter will argue that because of its dialogic nature, i.e. because of the unpredictability of the outcomes of dialogue and communication, language may always simultaneously entail both oppressive and transformative elements, regardless of whether it is understood as a language of rights, a language of integration or a language of resignification. In this respect it is neither viable nor beneficial to see language classes in binary terms as either maintaining the social order or challenging it. Rather, the final chapter argues for the possibility for language classes in general to become sites of transformation of citizenship through its enactment, while at the same time analysing the specific though diverse moments in which acts of citizenship do take place through some of them.

The centrality of language for the making, remaking, and transformation of citizenship will become clearer in the final part of the research, when its dialogical character will be highlighted. Dialogism itself is key to this thesis, providing with the tools to make sense of politics and language in interaction, rather than in dualistic terms of oppression or transformation.

Dialogism

This thesis emerges from a desire and a commitment to write about language, and from an idea that has been challenged and put to the test during the research of what language means and why it is important. My commitment to language is linked to its communicative character, to the way it opens up the possibility of exchange, collaboration, socialising, discussion, solutions, and ultimately transformative politics. One central concept that is indispensable for all of the above functions and expressions of language is dialogue. It is indeed the conception of language as dialogical and of dialogue as central to politics that informs the thesis as a whole. The idea of dialogue, following the theory of Bakhtin, is understood as the exchange or communication between one or more interlocutors, which may be abstract (such as the state, institutions or authorities) as well as concrete (single subjects or groups). Dialogue also consists of both utterances and responses and its outcomes are always open because of the impossibility of predicting the content, effect and direction of the possible responses as much as the influence of the utterance (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981). A dialogic approach is one, which assumes a multiplicity of perspectives and subject-positions, where each position is never fixed, but open to change and influenced by the response of the other. Meaning and truth are therefore to be understood in interactive terms, and they are irreducible to unity in any way. Dialogism is inherent to the social world, which entails a multiplicity of voices and positions that are irreducible to one or the other, and can and do only coexist in dialogue, because of its open-endedness.

Looking back at the role of the themes of exclusion and dichotomy in this thesis as a whole, through a dialogical approach these become strictly interconnected and impossible to be thought of in isolation to each other. It is indeed exactly with dialogism that the logics of exclusion and dualisms in general are best defied. The logic of

exclusion is necessarily undermined by demystifying and contesting its monologism, that is, attempts to deny dialogue and rely on fixed positions and unitary truths (in this case the excluded and the citizen-member). However, one can ultimately never avoid unexpected responses, even to violent and one-sided communications (better named commands) that attempt to constrain one's power to talk back. Once the impossibility of ever fully stopping dialogue as long as an interlocutor is present, is postulated (which is the main contribution of Bakhtin to this project), then all clear-cut dualisms appear as bound to failure, since they rest on the contraposition of irreducible positions, categories, truths and judgements.

Secondly, dialogism is central to the methodological approach of research of this thesis that sees my participation in x:talk and in the other projects precisely in terms of dialogue. The interviews were necessarily dialogical, and the active and distant observation carried out for this project. I attentively and carefully asked questions, listened and interacted, rather than attempting to find objective evidence. What got engendered by what I listened to and observed, as well as by what I responded to has been now partly written in this work, and its further interpretation remains open.

Thirdly, dialogism is also central to the way the theories reviewed, processed and developed are seen as interacting with and integrating each other, rather than as standing next to, or against one another. In this sense, the critique of language testing systems and its exclusionary aspect will not be rejected but dissected and expanded, to broaden its scope and to move away from possible dualisms by introducing the element of resistance and new ways of understanding language and citizenship. The approaches of critical and radical pedagogies critically reviewed in the second chapter will speak to both official language classes and to the alternative projects dealt with in the thesis, while this research also led to the practical collaboration, in form of training and

workshops, between x:talk and one important radical pedagogy language project in London in 2012⁵.

The theories on language and agency of Bourdieu, Butler and Bakhtin will also be exposed and worked on in dialogue with one another. The Bourdiean analysis of the embeddedness and construction of official language in dominant relations will be integrated by Butler's resignification, while both will be pushed out of their arguable mono-lingualism through Bakhtin's heteroglossia and dialogism. Bakhtin's vagueness as regards how to analyse the moments in which dialogue becomes politically transformative will then benefit from Isin's framework of acts of citizenship, whose analysis will be enriched by an understanding of the centrality of dialogue for enactments, by seeing language itself as a site of citizenship, and by analysing and reading acts in a more dynamic, open-ended way, accounting for and valuing their fragility.

Fourthly, and possibly most importantly, the interaction between theory and praxis, the empirical and the theoretical, will also inform the thesis. It is not that the theory is made to fit the practice or vice versa, but that the dualistic separation between them is challenged by exploring their relationship through a constant dialogue, in which one influences the other.

For this reason, information, data and narratives about the projects that form the empirics of the thesis will not be exclusively located in one separate chapter. Rather, the work of these projects will be set against, in context with and in corroboration of (i.e. in dialogue) the different stages and steps of the theoretical and illustrative journey of the thesis.

⁵ During my research for this thesis, I came across the organisation English for Action and its Reflect methodology, which are both dealt with more in detail in Chapter 2. In 2011, I attended a training with them, which then led me to organise a workshop with all x:talk's teachers and assistants the following year, in order to enrich and broaden our pool of teaching methods.

Finally, dialogical thinking also informs and integrates my approach to the theoretical analysis of acts and enactment of citizenship. Citizenship as enactment will be what will provide the final tools for conceptualising the politicality of dialogue, specifically in the work of x:talk, Worldword and ASP. In turn, equally in theoretical dialogue with citizenship as enactment, these projects' work will inform a different, fragile yet nuanced and dynamic account of sets of acts of citizenship which differ greatly from following a template of analysis. They make a difference. The theorisation of acts of citizenship is therefore also central to this work and it will be the kernel of the last two chapters. As one last theme of this introduction, I would like to now briefly present the concept of enactment.

Enactment

While it is only explicitly addressed in Chapters 5 and 6, the concepts of acts and enactment influence the thesis as a whole. Enactment is meant as the process through which single persons, groups or even institutions constitute themselves as political subjects, by posing new claims to rights, by bringing their presence and claims to the fore and by challenging prescriptive and scripted forms of being political and of being citizens through 'acts of citizenship' (Isin, 2009, 2012; Isin & Nielsen, 2008). As mentioned above, enactment is the lens through which this work will understand citizenship, i.e. as possibly disrupted and transformed by non-authorised, non-status holders in the moment of their engagement in acts of citizenship. In this thesis, acts of citizenship signify those instances that can be and are read as manifestation of citizenship as enactment, while enactment itself expresses the very process of understanding citizenship and politics in the making, beyond binary terms of oppression

or empowerment, of habitus or membership. Acts of citizenship are best interpreted as such in a dialogical moment, and are not defined by the intention of the speaker. Their meaning is not defined by the actors' will, but by the interaction between their act and the receiving public or audience (which can vary from one interlocutor, to wider society). The mutually theoretically enhancing relationship between enactment and dialogue will be explored in the main body of the thesis. I want, however, to highlight four of the ways in which thinking of citizenship through enactment influences the thesis as a whole, as this could aid the reading, illuminating the path through it.

The first influence enactment has is to be located in the way it draws attention onto the importance and existence of political resistance from the margins. Within the literature reviewed, I search for the presence or absence of acts of resistance and agency from the margins, and more specifically for the presence or absence of engagement with the existence of and enactments by non-status migrants and marginalised migrants working in informal sectors such as the sex industry or street selling. These are indeed figures and categories that, through bringing in the work of the three alternative language classes projects, I will show to be engaging in the transformation and challenge of citizenship as membership through enactment, language and dialogue. Both in Chapter 1 and 2, for instance, a nearly complete lack of engagement with undocumented migrants' agency and resistance is detected, whilst the theoretical chapters are strongly influenced by the need to make sense of agency and resistance through language from marginalised positions.

A second important contribution provided by the concept of enactment is the emphasis on disruption, rupture, breakages from the given social order, from the accepted, scripted and instituted forms of participation, membership, politics. The concept of enactment, with its emphasis on acts as rupture will lead the search for a way out from

exclusionary accounts of social order and social change as bound to reproduction, repetition and maintenance, whether this was set by the terms of language (Butler, 1997) or of authorisation (Bourdieu, 1991).

Another crucial help that thinking in terms of enactment has brought to my work is its strict politicality in relation to transformation. In the pedagogical context of language teaching to migrants, integration into the given order is arguably the main political objective pursued through official classes (rather than the possibility of developing new ways for transformation and change through dialogue). Within both official classes and many approaches of radical pedagogies however, personal empowerment is also seen as an important aim of language learning. Beyond the problem of empowerment as setting hierarchies of knowledge between the teacher who empowers and the student in need of empowerment (Rancière, 1991), a substantial danger is to reduce the potential of language knowledge and exchange to the individual's empowerment to take part in the opportunity structures, which would not necessarily or actually hardly undermine the dominant social order. Approaching language learning and language classes as possible (dialogical) enactments of citizenship helps moving away from an emphasis on personal empowerment within the given order, channelling the research towards political change and transformation.

A fourth theoretical contribution of the concept of enactment is the fact that it focuses on the reading of acts, on their answerability and purposiveness, but not on their intentions. In this sense, this thesis does not analyse and interpret data or happenings according to the direct interpretation of the subjects involved in carrying it out. Rather, it analyses events and acts in a dialogical way, that is, letting acts, actors, and reader all speak and push for new interpretations. Analysing acts and enactments as dialogical makes sense of the heterogeneity of the politics of x:talk, ASP and Worldword, whilst it

complements and strengthens the argument for the possibility of change and transformation from the margins. The point about enactment is taken up in the next section, for its obvious implications for the methodology of this research.

On the whole, these four themes are meant to provide a condensed but seminal theoretical introduction to the present work, and at the same time present the research's content and contribution. Concretely, they are fundamental to rework the understanding of language classes, taking beyond the more familiar criticism of their exclusionary implications; deepening an understanding of the work of language in them; and demonstrating how language classes can be sites of transformation from the margins.

Dialogical Methodology

The ways I have approached the search, gathering, and analysis of the data stemming from the empirical content of this research are very similar to each other. All of these were undertaken in dialogue, that is, through listening, speaking, reacting and interacting. I applied a dialogical approach to the way I positioned my research and myself during the fieldwork interviews. The practice and outcomes of the fieldwork were the product of political dialogue amongst migrants' rights activists, as much as between a researcher and an interviewee. The obvious reason for this is my own involvement and political work with x:talk.

Because of my particular active position in it, I will first concentrate on how I dealt methodologically with data from x:talk, and then go onto my fieldwork within the other two projects. As I mentioned previously, I have been working and organising within this project continuously between 2006 and 2013. All the data and information on the work

of x:talk come from my own experience with it. I have been teaching, assisting, translating, co-organising protests, speaking publicly, and carrying out research on its behalf throughout that period. Such experience was translated into empirical data, which were then put into dialogue with the theories applied in this research, while my activism and involvement in x:talk itself benefitted from and was influenced by this work.

Dialogism and enactment have both been central to the methodological approach of this research. I have indeed approached all the material gathered in my head and later put down on paper not in terms of looking for corroborations (or falsification) of a specific theory I wanted to use. Nor have I looked for my interpretations or intentions or those of other x:talk members in regards to practices, acts and events taking place within and through the project. Rather, I attempted to let them communicate with my theoretical interpretations, in order to maintain an open dialogue. I was careful and scrupulous in recording my own and other experiences, driven by the aim of collecting data to then interpret in dialogue, rather than according to personal intentions. In this respect, I do not claim objectivity in an abstract scientific sense based on an objective/subjective dualism, but defend an approach that analysed the data looking for multiplicity and transformation in dialogue as exchange, between me and the data and between the data and the theory.

By not treating any position as fixed or per se providing unique and true accounts, I aimed at avoiding hierarchical approaches between researcher and researched. This was also aided by a methodological move that found its backbone in the theory of enactment. Given that I was looking for data to make sense of political change from the margins, and not for individuals' empowerment, experiences and aims, I consciously avoided undertaking interviews with students who had not become part of the project as organisers or were not active in politics. It was not the people for their positionality or

intentions, but their acts and politics what I was looking to analyse. This aspect was also highlighted in my successful application for ethical approval. In the latter, I anticipated that my criteria to approach interviewees would be a shared commitment and engagement in political activism from the margins, in order not to end up reproducing dualistic subject/object relationships between the researcher and the researched. In this sense, I would be (and was) transparent about the necessary interconnection of the present research with the interviewees' and my own activism, and insisted that the latter, rather than 'them' would be the focus of the research.

Within x:talk I obviously disclosed the fact that I was writing a PhD on x:talk's use of language, and the things I was learning through this process were brought back to meetings and to the preparation of class material. Even here, not only was the thesis built upon and triggered by the study of an empirical project such as x:talk, but it also influenced the actual politics of the group. In other words, my fieldwork within x:talk did not consist of interviews between me as a researcher and a particular subject/object of research, but of a continuous dialogue between the experiences of an activist come researcher, the theories I encountered, and the experience of collective activism with other members of the projects, as well as the experiences of the students, which have been constantly provoking new thoughts and directions of analyses. My methodology is then also clearly related to both 'action' and 'militant research'. With action research this thesis shares the implication of the researcher in the practice researched and the active and direct contribution of the subjects involved to both processes of social change and knowledge production (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). With militant research, the awareness of how relations of exploitation are embedded not just in economic relations, but also in social reproduction, thus in research and pedagogy itself (Malo de Molina, 2004); and the consequent search for a practice that 'dissolves the asymmetrical relationship between researchers and researched' (Gutierrez-Rodriguez, 2006).

x:talk was not the only project forming and informing this work. While my experience with it precedes the choice of topic and the commitment behind this thesis, the other two projects were chosen after a carefully focussed search that led me to come into contact with a variety of projects both in Spain and in Germany. The choice of looking at projects in different EU countries was led by the interest in how policies on language and migration happen across countries in the EU. The choice of Germany and Spain, however, was not driven by an aim to cross-country comparison, but was influenced by my familiarity with the migrant rights activist scenes of these two countries. In Germany, after a thorough search intending to find political projects similarly positioned to x:talk, I could not find grassroots projects that were teaching the language without any link to the government. However, Worldword proved to be adding a very interesting example of alternative classes from within official ones, which while at the beginning made me insecure about its suitability, turned out to be one central project, through its specific defiance of the inclusion/exclusion dualism. In Spain, I encountered a whole network of grassroots migrant rights projects, the Oficina de Derechos Sociales (hereafter ODS) which amongst many other projects counted on a number of Spanish classes for undocumented migrants in different cities and locations. Amongst the different classes of ODS in Spain I visited and attended I chose to analyse the Asociación de Sin Papeles of Madrid because of my existing contacts with some of the activists, because of its inscription in the political happenings and protests in the city (I was in Madrid at the time of the so called 15M square occupation protests of 2011)⁶, and not least because of its complexity. The way I approached my research with Worldword and Asociación de Sin Papeles was in many aspects similar to my involvement with x:talk. I entered in dialogue with some of the activists and teachers

⁶ On 15th May 2011, after a big demonstration against the cuts and the economic crisis in Madrid, Spain, thousands of people occupied the city's main square and set up a protest camp against the government and the political class. The fight spread to many other Spanish cities and influenced the so-called "occupy" movement in other western countries and in Israel (Morán, 2013; Castañeda, 2012; Peña-López, 2013).

involved presenting my research as well as the work of x:talk. I decided and communicated that, likewise within x:talk, I would not interview students if they were not also organisers within the projects or otherwise active in political organising. After all, I was not looking so much for personal aims and interpretations, as for acts and dialogues. The aim of the research was from the beginning to be mutually beneficial for the projects it sought to include. I therefore presented x:talk's work at Asociación de Sin Papeles, and I am confident to say that the exchanges that took place between other activists or teachers and myself have been enriching for both sides through a number of political reflections on language, political becoming, pedagogy and agency. I will of course provide my finished work to x:talk, ASP and Worldword.

In order to gain more insights into the pedagogy and the dynamics of these projects' language classes, I also attended and sat in on a number of them, being briefly introduced by the teachers and introducing myself to the students. On most occasions, I was made a participant in the class and students came up to me in the breaks to ask questions to better understand my research and my position. The questions I asked in the interviews with activists and teachers and the things I noted during class, were data on interactions, dialogue, dynamics and outcomes of communications, pedagogical methodologies, and information about the activities and political mobilisation of the different groups. In line with my wish to remain within the spectrum of political subjectivity, enactment and transformation, I did not ask questions about intentions and objectives, but rather concentrated on getting information about experiences in class, within the organisation of the classes and political mobilisation around them. Although characterised by meticulous data gathering, this approach should not be read as an attempt to analyse objective facts, but rather as grounding the dialogical exchange in the possible interpretation of change and transformation derived from people's acts, rather than from their intentions. Acts are not to be understood as more objective than people's

intentions, as their interpretation and meaning are fully dependent on the dialogical moment of interaction between them and the reader. My approach is indeed a matter of understanding singular interpretations and intentions not as fixed or monological, but as working together, open to change, through dialogues amongst different readers/interlocutors.

Concluding this methodology section, I wish to spell out what my data gathering consisted of. I observed and participated in various projects and interviewed people involved. Between February 2010 and May 2012 I recorded information and data from most areas of my work in x:talk. This meant keeping a diary of meetings and classes and writing up notes and reflections that were then presented back to the group in order to discuss them together (such as my reflections on lack of attendance to classes reported in Chapter 3). My notes included contributions and reflections by other teachers and by activists/students. I explained my dual role as participant and researcher to them and asked for consent in case I was going to directly quote them.

Between May and June 2011 I observed five Worldword classes, and visited one class each of four Spanish projects belonging to the network of Oficina de Derechos Sociales, including Asociación de Sin Papeles, La Casa Invisible, Seco and Ateneu Candela. I also attended one end of course performance by students and teachers of ASP on 1st June 2011 and a general meeting of Ateneu Candela on 11th June 2011. Each time I kept diaries of the classes/events and explained my project and my parallel activism to every group.

I also conducted fifteen interviews with teachers and students/activists (respectively thirteen and three) from the different projects, including one with the founder of English for Action, Dermot Bryers. Three of these interviews were done over Skype and email but most took place face-to-face. Given that I was not going to apply discourse analysis, and that most of these interviews (thirteen) were made in Spanish or German, I did not

tape record them, but rather took notes during the dialogues. This helped me follow the unfolding of the interview, thinking through and responding to the different inputs of the interviewees whilst jotting them down.

This thesis is an attempt to account for, and to interpret the work of the projects analysed within the combined framework of enactment and dialogism, which have informed it altogether, starting from its very methodology. For the sake of clarity, I will now introduce each one of the following chapters and the work they will undertake towards this purpose.

Introducing the chapters

The context in which the thesis will unfold are language policies for the management of migration within the European Union, more particularly naturalisation language tests. The first chapter will sketch such context, while starting to review a first part of the scholarship that criticises and analyses it. This literature deals with language policies on migration from three main points of view. Firstly, the existence in many EU countries of national language tests to access rights will be exposed as a mechanism of filtering and exclusion that targets specific non-EU migrant groups. Secondly, language tests will be seen as stemming from and reinforcing ideologies of national identity and belonging. Thirdly, the tests will be read as constructing the good, active citizen and the migrant other, whilst reproducing cultural and linguistic hierarchies between superior languages (those to be tested) and inferior ones. This chapter will provide multiple critiques of testing language policies, setting clearly the problematic inherent to citizenship as governance and as membership into a definite and dominant political and cultural national community. It will also show how exclusion works as a central device of

citizenship and migration management, which will be addressed and problematised later on in the thesis. Within this chapter, three main missing elements in the literature will be pointed out. These are: the role of the language taught and tested and of language per se in the reproduction of domination and social order; the lack of a thematisation of the importance of national language knowledge for migrants' political becoming; and the absence of migrants' agency and resistance in countering oppressive language policies. These three challenges will be addressed at different stages, but will be central to the thesis as a whole.

The second chapter starts addressing how the language taught and the way it is taught matter in terms of both reproducing domination and of challenging existing hierarchies to engender social change. Some of the language taught in official classes in the UK and Germany will be analysed, showing how these classes are dedicated to the construction of the good citizen and to the maintenance of migrants' positioning in determined (lower) social positions.

After that, another body of literature will be reviewed: the theoretical production on critical and radical language teaching. Referring to radical educators and authors such as Paulo Freire (Freire, 2000), but also to political philosophers such as Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1991) and Jacques Rancière (Rancière, 1991), different methodologies will be reviewed, to think through and suggest ways to challenge domination, power relations and oppression within and outside the classroom. Some of these would be: starting from the experiences of oppression of the students (Freire, 2000); acknowledging the different linguistic and cultural capital amongst them (Bourdieu, 1977); challenging the reproduction of dominant habitus in the classroom through challenging hierarchical relationship between students and teachers (Bourdieu, 1977; Rancière, 1991); trying to address and challenge colonial consequences reflected in language (such as promoting the linguistic value of Black or Indian English) (Grant &

Wong, 2008); not undermining the value of the first languages of the students by making use of them in class (De Genova, 2005); not presupposing the ignorance and inequality of students for the sake of reaching equality through the help of the knowledgeable teacher (Rancière, 1991); and finally, attempting to teach the very language coming from the student, centring it on dealing with specific problems and on fostering possible action to solve them (English for Action, 2013b; Reflect, 2009). While these approaches address and deal with the importance of language knowledge and language teaching for politics, most of them⁷ make a problematic assumption: they leave the dominant power of language per se unexplored, and with this move they assume the possibility for students to develop their own language. In other words, their understanding of politics and language teaching assumes the possibility of dialogue between equals, rather than the possibility of change and transformation of inequalities through dialogue. On the other hand, this literature and the projects introduced in this chapter concerned with transformation and social change, tend to seek for the answer in their very methodologies, risking reproducing dualisms of 'empowering' and 'dominant' language classes, and failing to analyse otherwise when and how the transformative can take place outside of the classroom. Finally, with the exception of English for Action, which importantly runs classes open to non-status migrants, the literature on radical pedagogies does not engage with issues of access to language classes, which will be the topic of the third chapter.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to reporting the actual provision of and accessibility to official language classes in the UK, Germany and Spain. It shows how in the three countries the management of language classes and their accessibility for migrants differ markedly, but also how nowhere, at governmental level, are there classes openly accessible to non-

⁷ With the exception of Nicholas de Genova and Dermot Bryers of English for Action, who respectively problematise positionality and power in language (De Genova, 2005) and show an awareness of its uncontrollable power (Bryers, 2013).

status migrants. Because of their work with undocumented migrants, the three projects of x:talk, Worldword and ASP are introduced here, concentrating on the specificity of the issue of accessibility to them and looking at the different structural and conjunctural factors which hinder the capacity of potential students from attending their classes, even if free and confidential.

Chapter 4 addresses the issue of the power of language itself and the question of political agency from the margins. In this chapter, the theories of language and agency of Bourdieu, Butler and Bakhtin are analysed in relation to one another and to the work of x:talk, Asociación de Sin Papeles and Worldword, in order to make sense of both domination and resistance without being blind to one or denying the other. Bourdieu shows how the power of language is strictly connected to the workings of domination, internalised and reproduced, and how the force of speech depends not on language as a signifier, but on the authority in which the speaker is invested. Bourdieu's analysis of the embeddedness of language in dominant power relations, his refusal of an instrumental approach to language as empty signifier through which subjects pursue their aims remains a fundamental backbone of this project. Yet, his emphasis on authorisation and acknowledgement and on the difficulty of setting forth change and transformation from outside of these proves a hindrance to making sense of political agency and transformation from the margins. Examples from the work of the alternative language classes projects question clear cut, dualistic distinctions between an acknowledged and heterodox language and a reproductive orthodox one, while they call for the need for a vocabulary to analyse disruptions within dominant language and power which would not be depending on authorisation. Butler's understanding of performative power is valuable in this regard, through the concept of reiteration and temporality in language, where infinite repetitions allow for moments of stall, of breakage in dominant discourse, and where, regardless of authorisation, subjects engage

in transformation. Butler's theory will also show the fundamentally political and historical power of language, but instead of grounding it in authority she grounds it in language's own force of reiteration, which at the same time is the condition for its failures. Butler proves very helpful for leaving dualistic concepts of hetero and orthodox language behind, for refusing the primacy of authorisation for political change, and for introducing the concept of resignification, according to which hurtful and power-laden language may be reappropriated and acquire subversive power. Butler's theory speaks closely to the language taught for example in x:talk, where normally stigmatising terms are used in a context of defiance of such stigmatisation. However, Butler's pervasiveness of language over human agency, and the argued monolingualism of her theory will be questioned in light of the need to respond to the examples set by the projects, which suggest the possibility for subjects to act through language beyond the terms set by it, even if never on a simple voluntaristic basis. The chapter will conclude with Bakhtin, that in order to comprehend the complex power of language, and of the possibility of agency through it from different positions, there is a need to conceive language as multiple, both in concrete and in metaphorical terms. In this respect, language's power is not defined by either oppression or domination, but always entails both simultaneously. At the same time, each language which may be distinguished for his specific character, that is, the language of integration taught in official classes, or the language of socialising at work taught in x:talk, will always be internally diverse and entail different aspects and effects. Diverse languages are best analysed not in isolation but in dialogue with each other and, fundamentally, in dialogue with the subjects-speakers. It will be the openness of dialogue to the unpredictable responses of the interlocutors what will indicate the possibility of agency through language.

After the theoretical journey undertaken in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 integrates the

implications of agency in dialogue for a stricter understanding and analysis of political change and transformation. In order to do so it goes back to the original problem and question of the role of language in the making and maintenance of citizenship, questioning the established understanding of the latter as being about membership and as constituting the restricted realm of the political by excluding outsiders from citizenship as political subjectivity. It is in this chapter that the effectiveness and infallibility of the exclusionary logic will be challenged, by showing with Isin how the so-called 'excluded' take up decisive roles in the very making and transformation of citizenship. A new, binary defying conception of citizenship as political subjectivity will be therefore introduced: as enacted by un-authorised subjects of rights, through what Isin calls 'acts of citizenship'. Acts of citizenship are the moments in which, by claiming the rights to have rights, people not holding these rights disrupt the taken-for-granted order of things that seeks to exclude them. The second part of this chapter shows how, on the one hand, acts of citizenship happen in dialogue through language, and, on the other hand, it finds in enactment the possibility to identify the political and transformative in language and in dialogue. The chapter concludes that language is crucial not only to the maintenance of citizenship as membership and as governmental device, but also to its disruption and transformation: language, I will argue, is both a site of citizenship as enactment and as reproduction.

The last chapter finally brings together the fundamental elements worked through the thesis: language as multiple, oppressive and transformative; dialogical agency from the margins; and citizenship as enacted, in order to read closely and in dialogue with these theoretical achievements the work of *x:talk*, *Worldword*, and *Asociación de Sin Papeles*. The chapter departs from reading not only language but also language classes themselves as sites of transformative as well as oppressive citizenship. *Worldword* importantly delivers an example of how exclusionary mechanisms can fail (being an

official school which welcomes undocumented migrants), and of how transformative politics through language and dialogue can take place even in official settings, presenting its very set up, and some consequences of its political environment as dynamic and fragile acts of citizenship. x:talk and ASP demonstrate a complex set of acts of citizenship, including the set up of the classes; moments and processes that took place during the classes; and acts of mobilisation and claims to rights that emerged around the classes and through dialogue. These examples all show a series of unique yet similar fragile and complex enactments, rather than give a template according to which alternative language classes can be effectively organised, or according to which acts of citizenship should be detected or analysed.

By means of challenging exclusionary logics; of challenging dualisms; and of pursuing a dialogic analysis of language and of politics from the margins through understanding citizenship as enactment, this thesis reworks the relationship between language, agency, and political transformation in the context of restrictive use of language tests and classes. These four central themes make it possible to understand the transformative capacity of the practice of language classes.

Chapter 1 | Language Testing and Migration

The European Union is obviously not characterised by language unity. It is therefore hardly surprising that language policies at EU level would insist on promoting multilingualism. Multilingualism is mainly intended as the knowledge of more than one official EU language, i.e. those of the member countries. On the one hand, the outspoken aim is that every EU citizen would be able to speak “at least two other languages in addition to the mother tongue” (EU Commission, 2013). On the other hand, the integration of 'third country nationals' (i.e. non-EU migrants) is seen as proportionate to their knowledge of the language of the country they live in (EU Commission, 2011b:4). In respect to the integration of non-EU migrants, EU documents do not insist as much on multilingualism, but tend to focus on the necessity for member states to facilitate the improvement of migrants' national language skills. This suggests that EU citizens are seen as those who should benefit from multilingualism, whilst non-EU migrants have to first and foremost deal with the requirement of speaking the one official language. However, as a response to EU member states' implementation of language tests and obligatory language classes for non-EU migrants, the EU also insists that these should be accessible and not excluding less wealthy migrants, and also encourages the teaching of the migrants' first languages (EU Commission, 2011a:8). Interestingly, quite a discrepancy can be identified between how EU member-states manage their language policies and how the EU insists on integration rather than exclusion. This chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of what underpins specific EU

states' language policies on migration, in particular naturalisation language tests, and it will point out how these are instruments of migration control, which hierarchise amongst different languages and cultures, and reproduce beliefs on national identity and belonging. Going through existing critiques of the language testing systems in EU states, I will expose the main problems linked to these policies, which will aim at explaining the difference between 'monolingualism' at state level and promoted 'multilingualism' at EU level. The criticisms of language policies will also end up opening up questions related to the analysis of language classes themselves; to the actual importance of official language knowledge for migrants; and to the resistance of migrants' themselves to oppressive policies. These last three points will be henceforth dealt with in the coming chapters.

Language Testing and Citizenship in the EU

In the UK, as in many other EU member states⁸, non-EU migrants wishing to apply for citizenship are confronted with the challenge of passing a naturalisation language test. Since early 2006, non-EU migrants have to pass a language test whilst still in their home countries as a precondition for migrating to the Netherlands; in Autumn 2010 the UK introduced obligatory language testing for non-EU spouses of British citizens wishing to be united with their partners in the UK, and since April 2011 the test is a requirement for most applications for settlement (Extramiana, 2011; Home Office, 2013a). Germany, the first country to demand language skills for issuing permanent residence permits, has currently one of highest language level requirements for naturalisation in the EU, after increasing it further in 2008 (Van Oers, 2010).

Measures aimed at assessing the official language knowledge of (non-EU) migrants are

⁸ Including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Italy, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Sweden (Extramiana, 2011, p. 10) (for up-to-date information visit www.cudo-citizenship.eu)

often portrayed as promoting integration, social cohesion and inclusion (BBC News, 2007b; Brown, 2001; C. Campbell, 2010; Haug, 2008; Villarreal, 2009). The 'lack' of national language knowledge is seen as the main reason behind migrants' exclusion from full participation in society and their 'language penalty' as hindering their access to the skilled and unskilled labour market (S. Campbell & Roberts, 2007). In the context of an enlarging European Union, which promotes multilingualism as a favourable asset, official language knowledge is becoming a new criterion for accessing citizenship. What is considered by states as necessary language competence for citizenship or other rights has been added to and integrated within existing paths and regulations towards naturalisation. These were before (and still are) mainly: *jus sanguinis*, i.e. bloodline rights; *jus soli*, i.e. birthplace rights; and *jus domicili*, i.e. residence rights.

As well as granting the possibility to apply for citizenship to spouses of citizens, all 28 EU countries allow the acquisition of citizenship to people with close or less close (depending on each country) direct blood descent from the destination country (which is what *jus sanguinis* stands for). *Jus soli* refers instead to the right to gain the respective citizenship of the national territory one is born in (which is only granted in 20 EU states, and it is often subject to extra requirements, such as, e.g. in Germany and the UK being born of parents who were long term resident in the country)⁹. Finally, though nearly always subject to extra requirements, registered residents have the right (*jus domicili*) to acquire citizenship after a certain uninterrupted number of years, which vary from 3 to 12 years depending on single state legislations¹⁰. Proving sufficient official language knowledge is increasingly becoming one extra condition for being granted the above different rights to citizenship.

Beyond citizenship and naturalisation, national language knowledge is also increasingly becoming a criterion for measuring and pursuing the integration of migrants in general:

⁹ These are: Belgium, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Croatia and Slovenia (Bauböck & Honohan, 2010)

¹⁰ Varying from 3 years in Belgium to 12 years of residence in Switzerland (Bauböck & Honohan, 2010).

'linguistic integration' has now become a widespread term that links social cohesion with migrants' linguistic skills. The development of language policies for migration resulted in differently strict and more or less high linguistic integration requirements, with Germany being the country with the hardest ones and Spain only recently discussing their implementation (Extramiana, 2011; Goodman, 2010; Gutierrez Calvo, 2013). This trend is however developing a different take to the one pursued by the European Union and the Council of Europe, whose language policies explicitly encourage multilingualism, and the teaching of the national languages as well as of the migrants' mother languages, as part of a two-way process of integration (Council of Europe, 2008a; EU Commission, 2011c). The EU stresses the importance of providing accessible language classes rather than pushing for language testing, while the Council of Europe warns against the tendency within most European member states to move from offering integration to obliging it, enforcing language testing rather than encouraging its acquisition (EU Commission, 2011c; Extramiana, 2011; Goodman, 2010)

Newly arrived migrants, rather than being praised or acknowledged for their frequent multilingualism, are generally considered 'deficit groups' and language (i.e. the national language used by the dominant group in a specific country) has become the 'cornerstone' of European integration policies (Spotti & Van Avermaet, 2009). Language tests are implemented more often in receiving countries that tend to see immigration as a threat, thus wanting to limit it, than in countries that want to encourage it; and they become an "instrument of control... being legally required of some 'groups' but not others" (Wodak, 2010, p. 21).

The relatively recent introduction and diffusion of obligatory language naturalisation, settlement and entry tests in major parts of the EU has sparked numerous debates concerning the necessity and the usefulness of language and naturalisation testing for

integration (Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero, & Stevenson, 2009; Spotti & Van Avermaet, 2009). Interesting to note is that amongst scholarly analyses of the testing systems I was unable to find many arguments in favour of these. One exception was the advisor of the UK Home Office Dina Kiwan (Kiwan, 2008; Kiwan & Britain, 2007), who insists that language tests are a means to ensure that new citizens gain the right instruments to know their rights and obligations, to avoid their ghettoisation and to empower themselves. Contrarily, scholars from various disciplines have raised a number of arguments against the implementation of language tests, questioning their viability for integration and arguing how their introduction relates to a hardening trend of the requirements for entry, participation and integration into society (Goodman, 2010).

The arguments that can be found against the national language testing regimes are multiple, overlapping and interconnected. For the sake of clarity, I divided these into three main themes, which will be looked at in turn. First, I will approach the implications of these measures for belonging and the nation; second, their 'gate-keeping' or exclusionary function; and finally their role in the reproduction of hierarchies and inequalities between the 'citizen-subject' (Balibar, 2009) and the migrant 'other'. I will approach these analyses critically, in order to set the context in which language takes an oppressive role for migrants, for later opening up questions regarding migrants' political engagement and agency into transformation through language.

Reinforcing language and national identities

Ingrid Piller (Piller, 2001) and Tommaso Milani (Milani, 2008) both question the way the introduction of language testing in Germany and the debate around its introduction in Sweden are underpinned by ideologies of national identity that were called upon at

specific times and ultimately serve to define the nation by defining who belongs to the nation-state and who does not. Looking at the case of Germany, Piller shows how, needing to move away from a citizenship model strongly based on *jus sanguinis* which was denying too many residents access to naturalisation, the German government made knowledge of the German language a new criterion for the acquisition of citizenship. The measure was meant to limit the inclusion of non-ethnic-German migrants from belonging to the nation state. Piller recalls that until 2000, ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe could obtain citizenship without knowing the language, while some Turkish nationals who were German monolingual and had lived all their lives in Germany could not, unless they would renounce their Turkish citizenship. When nationality law was changed to encompass *jus soli*, testing the language was chosen as a compromise between ancestry and citizenship, i.e. between national identity as exclusively bound to ethnicity, and citizenship understood democratically as common rights and obligations (Piller, 2001:270). Whilst moving away from exclusive bloodline right to citizenship can definitely be seen as an improvement that probably had to take place in Germany because of its racialising content¹¹, Piller claims that the introduction of language tests was rather a way not to lose the stake of national identity as sameness. The author argues that tests are undemocratic in nature as democratic citizenship should be based exclusively on common rights and obligations, rather than on constructed identity and belonging (Piller, 2001, p. 274).

In his analysis of the Swedish debate on language testing for migrants, Milani points out how, even if Swedish society had been organised around the principles of diversity and multiculturalism since the 70's, the political trends in the country had gradually moved towards a more conservative take on migration, seen as cause of social problems, while accession to the EU had caused insecurity and fear of losing the national language in favour of English. Inscribing the introduction of language testing within these changes,

¹¹ I am referring here to the problematic of linking belonging to blood relations in a country with a recent devastating racist past.

Milani draws on Bourdieu's concept of habitus (defined by Bourdieu as the set of embodied practices unconsciously learnt and reproduced that constitute social reality and the perception of one's place within it) (Bourdieu, 1991) in order to show how national identity is reproduced over time around a perceived Swedish norm through shared language practices that contribute to defining membership in the imagined community of the Swedish nation. Milani also explains with Bourdieu how the habitus “gives a sense of what one's place is” in contraposition to “a sense of the other's place”, i.e. in contraposition to those whose habitus (language included) differs from the Swedish norm (Milani, 2008, p. 49). In this respect, Milani argues that language testing would not help achieve an equal place between migrants and ethnic Swedes. The testing would rather further reproduce the 'symbolic boundary' between those who have to pass the test and those who do not, being already legitimate members of the imaginary national community (Milani, 2008, p. 49).

The link between official language, national identity and language testing regimes for migrants is reflected not only in the presence, but also in the absence of language testing: as in the complex, multilingual national context of Spain. Dick Vigers and Clare Mar-Molinero show that, since Spain turned into a country of immigration, language knowledge has played a crucial role in determining access to rights and participation in society. According to the authors, migrants with Spanish as their first language are seen as considerably better able to integrate, and in order to gain citizenship, language knowledge is assessed during an interview whilst perceived lack of language knowledge has been documented to be the main cause of refusal of naturalisation applications (Vigers & Mar-Molinero, 2009). However, while the Spanish public discourse and in particular the conservative Partido Popular has recently put forth the proposal to test migrants' Spanish knowledge before granting citizenship, there is still no such measure in place (Gutierrez Calvo, 2013). According to Vigers and Molinero, the reason for Spain's reluctance to officially propose and adopt a language testing policy is rooted in

the very national composition of the country, which, far from being monolingual, acknowledges the autonomy of three more languages apart from Castilian, i.e. Catalan, Basque and Galician. Moreover, since the post-Franco era, there has been tensions between Spanish centralism and autonomous, bilingual regional governments. In this context:

Any attempt to include an explicit and formalized language competence requirement, either as a measure to control migration flows or as a necessary requirement to accession to citizenship, powerful though it would be as an acknowledgement to autochthonous Spaniards of the importance of maintaining a cohesive society, would exacerbate internal political tensions between the centre and regional governments with bilingual policies. (Vigers & Mar-Molinero, 2009, p. 180)

The Spanish case illustrates and corroborates the argument that official language testing is intrinsically linked to and mutually constitutive of ideologies national identity. As much as testing the official language would reinforce specific, centralist ideologies of (Spanish) national identity, it could have the opposite effect. Indeed, in this one same geo-political country affiliations and belonging to imaginary communities are linked to different languages and regions, and making the official language even more official could threaten the unstable balance of national unity.

Through language tests, the bond between national identity and official language knowledge has found a renewed strength, in apparent contradiction with (and arguably also as a reaction to) the calls for multilingualism and the actual linguistic diversity within the EU. As Adrian Blackledge and Sue Wright put it: “language testing regimes are based on the notion that when all are able to demonstrate proficiency in the national

language, it will be possible to achieve national unity and a sense of common belonging” (Blackledge & Wright, 2010, p. 15).

Along a similar line, Elana Shohamy reminds that “it is widely believed nowadays that knowledge and use of the dominant language(s) of the state serve as primary symbols of belonging, loyalty, patriotism and inclusion” (Shohamy, 2009, p. 48). Indeed, as Benedict Anderson argued, language plays a fundamental role in the making and maintaining of that 'imagined community' which is the nation (Benedict Anderson, 2006). Jan Blommaert points out that although nation states are far from clearly monolingual, they produce and regulate ethno-linguistic identities through the promotion of national language(s) as the 'ideal' and 'desirable' one(s) (Blommaert, 2006, p. 244). Blommaert also maintains that the state itself presupposes the intrinsic monolingualism of people in order to promote “the 'monolingual speaker of one of the national language(s)'” as the “most powerful ethnolinguistic identity” (Blommaert, 2006, p. 244). Makoni and Pennycook sustain that the construction of nation goes hand in hand with the invention of languages and call for the 'disinvention' and reconstitution of uniform languages in order to undermine ideologies of national homogeneity (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Moyer and Rojo come to argue that migrants, with their multilingualism, actually challenge the linguistic construction of the nation-state as homogenous from below (Moyer & Rojo, 2007).

Shohamy, on the other hand, challenges the very assumption of the need for all migrants to be proficient in the dominant language (Shohamy, 2009). Noting how, by means of transnational social networks and translation services, migrants may participate in society without any knowledge of the dominant language, she asks: “How essential is knowledge of a specific language in an era of globalisation, diversity, common markets, transnationalism, multilingualism, striving diasporas and flexible boundaries?” (Shohamy, 2009, p. 49).

While Shohamy's may be a legitimate question, in the case analysed here one is

confronted with a more complex situation altogether. On the one hand, a transnational European identity, multilingualism and the preservation of the national languages and cultures of all different Member States are encouraged and promoted at EU level (Wodak, 2010); on the other hand, in national contexts, the first languages of non-EU migrants are regarded as causes of social problems and lack of integration (Blackledge, 2006; Spotti & Van Avermaet, 2009). 'Integration *into*' an assumed homogeneous existing society is commonly represented as stemming from a "unilateral effort of the incoming minority to learn the 'national' language of the state" (Stevenson, 2006). In this context of ongoing construction of a European identity, of globalisation and transnationalism, language naturalisation testing for migrants has taken place as a reaction to a perceived threat to national identities and languages, and it affects the lives, rights and the belonging to the national community of those who have to undergo it (Blackledge & Wright, 2010; Cooke, 2009; Stevenson, 2006). Indeed, far from being empowering for migrants attempting to gain citizenship rights, Melanie Cooke, scholar and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher, reports how in the UK many ESOL students experienced the implementation of the naturalisation test as making it much harder for migrants to belong, especially Muslims who feel the content of the test as anti-Islam, and low-paid workers, who do not have the time to prepare for it and end up repeating it many times (Cooke, 2009, pp. 75-76).

Hence, when looking at the EU it is not enough to unveil the ideologies of national identity and language unity which lie behind language testing, or to turn to transnationalism in order to argue against it. Rather, it is crucial to take into consideration who is the target of such measures (i.e. which non-EU migrants), at what times, what are the implications for it and what specific language is required. Looking closely at who the target of testing is will allow to dig deeper into the question of language policies for citizenship. It will ask who (if any at all) are those migrants whom

the test is supposed to benefit on the way to gaining rights, and why.

The complexity of the links between language testing, migration, and European identities has been addressed by Ruth Wodak in her essay 'Communicating Europe' (Wodak, 2010). Wodak considers the contradictions inherent to the construction of a European identity, both analysing official EU documents on multilingualism, interviews with migrants on their experiences of racism and discrimination because of their languages, and the introduction of language tests for naturalisation. She concludes that:

Multilingualism possesses other, contradictory functions (...): gate-keeping functions and the construction of inclusion and exclusion. (...) Although membership can always be redefined, important 'gatekeepers' decide who will have access: new laws, new ideologies, new languages, and new borders – in Europe and elsewhere. Mostly it is not up to individuals to define or redefine their membership: this depends on structural phenomena of exclusion. The desired 'opening-up' of the European Union, the greater participation and democratization, therefore still has to overcome some essential obstacles if it is to reunite the so-called *parallel lives*. (Wodak, 2010, pp. 31-32, italics in the original)

Looking at which, whose and how multilingualism is promoted in the EU, Wodak argues that inclusion/exclusion functions as a shifting but ever present dimension in the making of the EU and of a European identity, and, as I will show more in detail in the next section, language tests have become one of the means for it. In this respect, even if at EU level tests are encouraged to be implemented for the inclusion of migrants into the rights of citizenship and not for the exclusion of some against others (EU Commission, 2011a), there is no evidence of punctual assessment of how the singular EU countries implement these test and how they affect different migrants in different ways.

The authors outlined in this section have shown how language is clearly one powerful

way to construct and reaffirm national identities and belonging. This aspect is crucial in order to analyse why tests are implemented in a specific point in history, and in order to understand how citizenship is managed through language and language policies in general.

The construction of belonging and national identity implies the exclusion of those non-belonging, in this case, those non complying with certain language requirements. In the context of the EU, where national belonging is concomitant with the construction of a European identity, the creation of identity and belonging behind language tests are complex and are connected to specific mechanisms of exclusion.

Exclusion through language testing

As explained previously, language testing for migrants wishing to apply for citizenship has been promoted in many EU countries as increasing integration and social cohesion by means of urging migrants to learn the official language of the country. However, if language knowledge for integration were to be at the core of the new measures, it would be unlikely that this were best obtained with a one-off test, rather than promoting education and increasing funding for language teaching. Yet, in many EU countries there has been a shift from providing subsidised classes for migrants to enforcing specific programmes, testing the language and sanctioning migrants' failure to attend or pass (Van Avermaet, 2009). This suggests that, rather than integration, such measures are aiming at excluding a great number of migrants from full access to rights. Indeed, the role of naturalisation language tests as overt mechanisms of exclusion and gate-keeping devices has been central to the analyses of most scholars who have reacted to the introduction of this policy. Van Avermaet for example reports how, in the Netherlands, language tests are openly meant to reduce and control immigration,

particularly attempting to lessen “the number of marriages of second or third generation Turkish boys or girls with someone from the home country” (Van Avermaet, 2009, p. 36). Blackledge, looking at the case of the UK, also sees language testing as reinforcing the gate-keeping mechanisms already at play to make citizenship even less accessible (Blackledge, Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero & Stevenson, 2009). Ricky Van Oers, in his comparative chapter on naturalisation tests in the Netherlands, Germany and the UK, shows how in Germany and the Netherlands the introduction of (stricter) language testing has led to a decreased number of naturalisations, specifically those of the less-educated, first generation migrants (Van Oers, 2010). The author argues that the testing measures are being discursively linked to integration, though their effect has been to exclude large numbers of people from full citizenship rights, which would necessarily not be a step towards participation in society, or integration. In the UK, although naturalisation numbers have not decreased in total, they have for particular sections of the applying migrant population. In all three countries, the tests are being made stricter and regardless of their restrictive effect, they “send out a message to the less well-educated immigrants that they are not welcome, or are at least less welcome” (Van Oers, 2010, p. 102). It is necessary, the author concludes, to realise that the tests are a mechanism of exclusion, a further way of filtering migration and the rights given to which migrants, and that the stress on integration as the ultimate reason for enforcing them rests on a purely cognitive understanding of the latter, rather than on an emotional one (Van Oers, 2010, p. 103).

In order to show the exclusionary function of tests, Shohamy questions the very efficacy of tests as measurements of knowledge, arguing that they “often have a negative impact on learning and lead to narrowing the curriculum and knowledge” (Shohamy, 2009, p. 51). Shohamy looks at how language tests are based on monolingual, standardised criteria and norms, which do not reflect migrants' multilingualism and the way most of them experience learning a new language. This, together with migrants' different

departing levels of literacy, further restricts the chances to pass such tests, leading to exclusion from citizenship (Shohamy, 2009).

Drawing on Bourdieu, Shohamy also argues that beliefs about the tests' validity are grounded in their 'symbolic power', i.e. in their misrecognised, unspoken and uncontested authority and in the wide consensus over their validity (Bourdieu, 1991; Shohamy, 2009). The very consensus over them is what leads “governments to use them in the context of immigration and thus to control and restrict the entry and continued residence of groups that the state is eager to keep out” (Shohamy, 2009). Thus, Shohamy concludes that tests are ultimately a means for states to exclude specific groups from basic rights and services such as healthcare and social security, overtly discriminating between speakers of the official language and (certain) speakers of other languages (Shohamy, 2009, p. 55).

As mentioned earlier, Milani also looks at the exclusionary effects of language tests for naturalisation. He identifies what he calls a 'civic paradox' between discourses of integration and inclusion in society and the obvious exclusion that will affect those who fail the test:

After all, one might also wonder why a nation-state would introduce a test at all, if not in view of ruling out those who might fail. Consequently, there will always be somebody who will be excluded from rights and duties. (Milani, 2008, p. 20)

In the case of the UK, in 2009 one in three applicants were reported to have failed the combined language and citizenship test, and the figures for the testees also included native English speakers (BBC News, 2010). Agreeing with Milani, it is rather obvious that a test with high margins of failure will prove exclusionary. Indeed, language tests for naturalisation can be regarded as attempting to filter desired from undesired migrants, i.e. those with the economic resources to attend specific classes, and/or with

good levels of education and literacy, from those who lack economic and 'linguistic' capital (Bourdieu, 1991). It is not surprising that in 2009 in the UK the highest success rate in the naturalisation test was to be found amongst applicants from wealthier English speaking countries: 97.7%, 96.9% and 98.0% of applicants from respectively USA, Canada and Australia passed the tests, while the success rate amongst applicants from poorer countries with lower adult literacy levels like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh was 79.2%, 63.8% and 44% respectively (the latter being the lowest rate at all) (BBC News, 2010). In 2013, a briefing by the Migration Observatory of Oxford University on naturalisation reported that the percentage of rejected applications because of test failure was small, but stressed that their requirement may deter potential applicants (Blinder, 2013, p. 2). In April 2013, the UK Immigration Minister Mark Harper announced the “toughening up” of language requirements for naturalisation from 28th October 2013, justifying this by declaring that “British citizenship is a privilege not a right” (Home Office, 2013b). Moreover, as already mentioned, in the UK, as in the Netherlands and Germany, a language entry test is already a requirement for non-EU migrants prior to their arrival in the country for temporary residence or reunification with spouses. It seems quite straightforward that these measures are oriented to limit and select migration. In the case of Germany, the execution of the test in the home country has to take place in a specific institute, which is usually located in very few bigger cities, and demands the economic and physical effort of travelling there, while courses are usually available at the same institutes and recently online (Uhl, 2007). For learning Dutch on the other hand, applicants can purchase a learning pack of the cost of €110, and must go to the Dutch consulate to take the test (Naar Nederland, 2013). The selection and restriction starts taking place already in the country of origin, making it harder for less wealthy and mobile migrants, as those living far from the capitals, for example in rural areas, to take and even prepare for the test.

A further, interesting argument to support the thesis that language tests for citizenship in

EU countries are filtering, exclusionary gatekeepers rather than tools for integration and social cohesion is the critique of the widespread usage of the Council of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference* (hereafter CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). The framework was first drafted in 2001, and it aims to create a 'metalanguage' of language levels and qualifications, which would allow communication between different linguistic institution in different European countries and the mutual acknowledgement of language qualifications. The CEFR entails a descriptive part, which comprises of a distinction between reception, interaction, production and mediation, rather than using the traditional skill-set of writing, reading, listening and speaking, and four domains in which language is to be contextualised: the public, the personal, the educational and the occupational. Beyond setting the context and modes of learning of a foreign language, the CEFR also developed six levels of language knowledge, going from the most basic to the highest level: i.e. A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. EU countries are increasingly adopting this framework as a tool to set forth their language policies to manage migration and naturalisation. However, the CEFR is an instrument designed for the acquisition of foreign language by adults with a basic previous knowledge and a literate and educated background, rather than migrants having to learn a second language with no previous knowledge, a different education and/or no literacy skills. Hence, given that it was designed for a totally different target and language skills development, using CEFR as a reference to teach the language and to determine migrants' levels of language knowledge proves exclusionary. As Spotti puts it:

On the basis of being unsuccessful at a language test that was never intended for these purposes, people are refused citizenship, residence or even admission. (...) the CEFR, which is essentially meant as a tool to promote plurilingualism, is used by some policy makers as a scientific justification to promote monolingualism in official state

languages and to focus more on what newcomers lack than on what they might be able to contribute and add in terms of resources to a more diverse society. (Spotti & Van Avermaet, 2009, p. 17)

Language tests can be seen as clear instruments for filtering the access to rights and nationality, because the very nature of testing itself, and because of their blindness to the different positionality and literacy background amongst the migrants required to pass them. Given that, as argued in the previous section, language is a strong criterion for the construction of national belonging, it is important to spell out the specific measures taken to apply such criterion to migration policies, the more so when it becomes clear that the latter have a specific exclusionary character: again, belonging and identity are created against the construction of the non-belonging.

Connected to their construction of belonging, it is also crucial to add that the implications of language testing measures do not exclusively relate to the practical exclusion of those migrants who, for a variety of reasons, fail the tests, do not get to take part in it, or do not reach the desired level of language knowledge. These measures affect directly or indirectly the whole of society by constituting and reproducing hierarchical divisions and inequalities between migrants and citizens and amongst migrants themselves. In the next section, I will look at how, apart from being exclusionary, tests contribute to consolidating the citizen-subject as opposed to the migrant other through inferiorising the languages and cultures that are not tested.

Hierarchising and the making of the 'good citizen'

Language tests for naturalisation have the extended function of establishing who will become a citizen and who will not. The test comes in addition to all the economic, political, bureaucratic, and legal barriers that (non-EU) migrants are likely to face in the

process of creating or keeping a place for themselves in a country other than the one they are nationals of: once all other barriers have been overcome, once even the application for naturalisation is on its way, there comes the language test as one seemingly last major trial to finally gain the “privilege” (Home Office, 2013b) of citizenship rights, citizen status. Considering all the challenges that most non-EU migrants meet on their path to officially becoming part of the receiving society, it is unsurprising that such challenges, especially insofar as they are institutionalised, actually contribute to the reproduction of symbolic divisions between the citizen-subject and the other, the migrant. These divisions work on two interconnected levels: the reaffirmation of the category of the good citizen, the one who does not need to prove its worthiness of the right to citizenship; and the construction of hierarchies of belonging and of value amongst different migrants and citizens, according to their necessity and ability to pass or even to be eligible to take the language test.

Measures that restrict access to citizenship have been understood as consolidating the legitimacy of the ethnic citizen, the 'real' citizen, as opposed to the migrant other. In this respect, Milani conceptualises language testing for citizenship with Bourdieu as a “rite of institution” (Milani, 2008), defining it as:

(...) a social ritual, which officially defines a compulsory precondition for being ascribed the identity of citizen – namely, knowing a given language. As a rite of institution, language testing for naturalization creates a given social reality for those who undergo it. Furthermore, a language test for naturalization also demarcates another boundary between those to whom the rite pertains – immigrants– and those to whom the rite does not pertain. (Milani, 2008, p. 45)

It is exactly such boundaries between those who have to prove their worthiness of being full member of the society by passing a test (again, non-EU migrants) and those who do

not, that will maintain hierarchies and inequalities between the legitimate citizen and the migrant other. According to Dimitry Kochenov:

Asking those who successfully functioned in a society for years on end to pass any tests for naturalization amounts to underlining their 'otherness' and stressing the presumption against the acceptance of such people as equals before they pass through the state-sponsored 'purification' process. (Kochenov, 2011, p. 110)

Kochenov also argues that testing a 'state sponsored' language and culture for obtaining citizenship automatically constructs the languages and cultures of the migrants who have to take the test as inferior to European ones (Kochenov, p. 110). Thus, one can argue that regardless of whether the 'rite of institution', that is, the test is passed or not in the individual cases, the very existence of such tests will reproduce the (inferior) otherness of non-EU migrants whose first language is not an official European one. Although, as Kochenov notes, "the return to the logic of modern states actively shaping their nations and annihilating the 'other' within their borders is highly unlikely", the inferiorisation of cultures and languages other than the 'tested' ones can lead to tensions in society and undermine social cohesion (Kochenov, 2011, p. 118).

A concrete instance of how language tests produce hierarchisations and tensions both within micro-relations and, more generally, relating to discourses of cohesion and integration can be found in the example of the post 2001 race riots UK. In a diametrically opposed fashion to seeing testing as an indirect cause of tensions in society, it is indeed migrants' 'lack' of official language knowledge what is often constructed as cause of social unrest. One example of this can be found in the UK, where Asian languages have been associated with social segregation and isolation (Blackledge, 2006, p. 72). In the aftermath of the 2001 'race riots' in northern England, Blackledge reports, government representatives identified the causes of the unrest

within Asian communities in the youths' lack of good English knowledge, seen as caused by their own mothers' lack of English. Accordingly, a language test for Asian spouses of British citizens was proposed as a solution, while Asian parents were told to "consider arranging marriages for their children with Asian Muslims brought up and educated in the United Kingdom" (Ann Cryer, Labour MP in 2001, quoted by Blackledge, 2006, p. 147). Blackledge recurs to Bourdieu's notions of 'euphemisation' to analyse how "in the discourse surrounding the language ideological debate which argued that minority Asian languages are associated with violence and segregation, language is often ambiguous, two-sided, and even contradictory" (Blackledge, 2006, pp. 158-159). The Bourdiean concept of euphemisation used by Blackledge is to indicate the way in which problematic (in this very case, racist) statements that could not be publicly made are indirectly implied and set forth through other, seemingly less problematic ones. Blackledge unpacks how politicians manage to argue through euphemising discourses that Asian spouses coming from outside the UK are the cause of social segregation because of their lack of English, while Asian men are those who deny the women their civil rights by preventing them from learning it (Blackledge, 2006, p. 160). As a result, Asian languages (and Asian men and women) are indirectly constructed as hindering social cohesion, and obligatory language tests are proposed as a preferable solution (Blackledge, 2006, p. 160). Drawing a parallel with Blackledge's analysis of the linking of national language knowledge and social unrest, Patrick Stevenson and Livia Schanze also point at how, particularly during the debate around banning the usage of migrant students' first languages (predominantly Turkish and Arabic, i.e. not official 'EU' languages) in a public school in Berlin in 2006, insufficient knowledge of the German language by migrants and their offspring was directly linked to social fragmentation and the disintegration of German society in ghettos (Stevenson & Schanze, 2009). Quoting the comment page of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 28/01/2006, the authors show how language acquisition is seen as the 'minimal

requirement' for migrants who want to become German citizens, given that "nobody is being forced to become one" (Stevenson & Schanze, 2009). Although there were challenges to the enforcement of German usage in the Berlin Herbert-Hoove-Oberschule that pointed at the violation of basic rights, the school's response merely resulted in a change of formulation of the regulation in the matter: instead of naming German 'official language' they called it 'language of communication', still leaving the policy enforcing its usage unmodified. Stevenson and Schanze conclude:

The case shows in a graphic way the interaction between public policy discourses at local and national levels and how discourses on language become subsumed in broader discourses on citizenship and belonging and in conceptions of 'appropriate and acceptable behaviour' of the 'good citizen'. (Stevenson & Schanze, 2009, p. 103)

The devaluation of (non-EU) migrants' first languages is reinforced by arguments for the enforced usage or testing of the national language, and it has a direct impact on the construction of the legitimate (privileged) citizen. Bourdieu is a recurrent reference in the literature exploring these conjunctures between citizenship, migration and language policies. Wodak, in analysing the role that different language(s) play in the EU, adds the Bourdiean concept of 'linguistic market' to that of 'habitus' in order to point at inequalities inherent in language policies (Wodak, 2010). Wodak argues with Bourdieu that in a linguistic market different actors are involved, the value of whose utterances depends on their positioning in society and on the more or less official and ritualised context in which they speak. Quoting the French philosopher, she points out that "there is a very clear relation of dependence between the mechanisms of political domination and the mechanisms of linguistic price formation that characterize a given social situation" (Wodak, 2010). Wodak uses Bourdieu in order to assert how different languages hold different symbolic capital in the linguistic market and how certain

languages are therefore more 'hegemonic' than others (Wodak, 2010, p. 9). Indeed, following a Bourdiean logic, by enforcing language tests for citizenship the nation-states reconfirm the dominant status of national language(s) in respect to other languages, thus lowering the value of the latter in the linguistic market together with reproducing the (low) social and political position of their speakers. Wodak goes on to analyse the migration policies of eight EU Member States, and a number of interviews with migrants living in these¹². According to the findings of Wodak's study, migrants experience discrimination, are racialised and constructed as unwelcome 'others' through language (either because of speaking a different language or because, when bilingual, they may prefer to use their mother language(s) at times, rather than the national one), as well as through looks – which she sees as both being part of what Bourdieu calls 'habitus' (Wodak, 2010, p. 20).

Summing up, the opposition between those whose skills have to be tested and those whose don't and between the languages to be tested and the languages not to be tested both help reproducing the symbolic divide between the good citizen and the migrant other. However, these measures will also contribute to the maintenance of inequalities amongst different status migrants: between EU migrants who don't have to pass the test to reside and non-EU migrants who do; between migrants who pass the tests and migrants who don't; and between migrants who get to take the test and migrants who are illegalised and cannot. To say it with Bourdieu, language tests maintain and reproduce the hierarchical positioning of languages on the linguistic market, thus necessarily hierarchising amongst those who are more or less defined and affected by the languages they have knowledge of; those who have to prove to have national language knowledge; and those who are not even considered in the process.

¹² i.e. Austria, France, Italy, Sweden, UK, Cyprus, Poland, Germany (Wodak, 2010, p. 17)

Behind and beyond language testing

So far I have shown that the gradual introduction of language testing for citizenship in various EU countries has given rise to debates and criticisms that question the policy from different angles and unpack what lays behind them. Some scholars have attempted to expose and undermine the language ideologies that underpin language testing for citizenship, such as the belief that monolingualism brings cohesion and strength to the nation, or the construction of national identities as strictly connected to national language(s). Authors have shown how such beliefs have been imposed by the nation-states (Blommaert, 2006); how they rest on unrealistic assumptions about inherent monolingualism (Blommaert, 2006; Shohamy, 2009); how they are called upon at specific historical times in need for criteria for re-establishing belonging to the nation (Milani, 2008; Piller, 2001); how they contradict the promotion of multilingualism entailed in the construction of a European identity (Wodak, 2010); and, finally, how these beliefs must be contextualised within contemporary transnationalism and globalisation (Shohamy, 2009; Wodak, 2010).

Language tests for naturalisation have also been criticised for being overt mechanism of exclusion, aimed at restricting and controlling migration, at filtering desirable from undesirable migrants, and at restricting access to rights and resources, rather than as being the answer to matters of social cohesion and integration. The exclusionary function of these language tests has been located in the very nature of tests (Milani, 2008; Shohamy, 2001 and 2009); in the fact that they are not accompanied by an extension of subsidised language classes (Van Avermaet, 2009); and in the fact that they target specific groups of migrants (Blackledge, 2006; Piller, 2001; Van Avermaet, 2009; Wodak, 2010).

Finally, it has been argued how language tests may not only exclude large numbers of (non-EU) migrants from gaining access to the rights entailed in full citizenship, but they

also contribute to the construction of the legitimate citizen as opposed to the migrant other, and reproduce and reinforce hierarchies and inequalities between dominant languages and culture, and 'inferior' ones (Blackledge, 2006; Kochenov, 2011; Milani, 2008; Wodak, 2010).

While extensive analysis has been undertaken on language tests for citizenship, and there is probably more on its way as more countries are adopting these, there are three main interconnected areas of analysis that seem to be missing and would need further unpacking. First of all, there is a limited if not lacking engagement with the importance of the language being tested itself, together with how it is being taught within official language classes.

Van Avermaet points out that there is a shortage of provision and that existing language classes “should be more 'tailor-made' and based on an accurate and realistic analysis of the needs and possibilities of the learner/user/candidate” (Van Avermaet, 2009, p. 21), and Spotti shows how language classes who use the CEFR as reference may prove exclusionary and unapt for the purpose of teaching migrants (Spotti & Van Avermaet, 2009). However, on the whole, the critiques on the testing regimes do not take into account how the reproduction of the dominant language through the official language classes that many migrants need to take in preparation for the tests can also contribute to the reproduction of hierarchies and of the existing social order. An analysis of the provision of language classes would be crucial given that not only tests, but also attendance at language courses is made obligatory in certain nation-states (Jacobs & Rea, 2007; Wodak, 2010), and that in order to pass the tests a certain, dominant language is required that is most likely to be learnt only through attending (more or less specific) language classes. Moreover, examining the very language taught and how it is taught would broaden the focus on the role of national language for nation building, it would expand and complexify the understanding of exclusionary and hierarchising mechanisms, through integrating the multifaceted power of language itself for both the

maintenance and the transformation of existing social divisions.

A second aspect missing from this literature is the positive assets possibly provided by language knowledge. Together with an analysis of how dominant language and official language classes might not be necessarily beneficial to (all) migrants, there is also the need to engage with the fact that communication and language knowledge *are* important for migrants in their everyday life, in order to get by in the labour market, to build social networks, to have the means for accessing services and demanding them, and, crucially, in order to organise oneself and to be able to assert and claim one's rights. Many migrants do want to and manage to learn the national language through a variety of means, and the possibly transformative consequences of this are important to consider, away from a paradigm that sees official language mainly in terms of object of oppressive and exclusionary tests.

The third aspect relates to the very agency of migrants' themselves. The importance of looking into the power of language beyond its exclusionary dominant character is linked to one main aim of this thesis, namely, enquiring into the mobilisation and political becoming of migrants, who come to claim their rights and do so through politics and communication, i.e. through language. What seems to have been left unexplored in the above literature is the possibility of acts of resistance to or mobilisation against the testing regimes or the official language classes. Migrants appear only as objects of discriminating and unjust policies, and are not considered as subjects or agents that could address the limits of exclusive citizenship through their actions. This is combined with the absence of any reference to a whole section of the migrant population that cannot even start the naturalisation process because they lack the status and the documents to do so. I am thinking here of asylum seekers, undocumented migrants and migrant workers in the informal or 'unconventional' markets, such as street sellers, care, domestic and sex workers. This absence, so will be argued further on in the thesis, is strictly linked to the assumption of effectiveness of the mechanisms of exclusion that

seek to impede the presence of non-status migrant within the political (and not only) realm. Overcoming such a dualistic view of politics and citizenship as inclusion/exclusion will be central to the development of an understanding of the possibility of agency and politics through language. In particular in Chapter 5, I will show how analyses that focus on the logics of exclusion are bound to reconstruct the other as outsider, reaffirming her position as such, and obscuring her agency and resistance, which is what the above reviewed scholarship on language testing risks doing.

This literature does crucial work unveiling what lies behind language policies in the EU. It goes significantly beyond the official integration and migration management approach that presents language tests as contributing to cohesion and integration and language classes as methods of increasing migrants' participation in society. Language tests and classes are indeed powerfully linked to 'nation building', migration management and exclusion, and hierarchising citizens. Yet, this scholarship has important limits that curtail a full political understanding of language and language classes and the power relations that are exercised through language. In order to address this, the coming chapter will consider both the role of language taught in official classes in the maintenance of hierarchies and social order, and the possibility for language classes to challenge the latter, through a closer look into another relevant body of literature, that is, radical and critical pedagogies of language teaching. The following chapters will further complexify and explore the interconnections of language classes provision, language and political agency and citizenship transformation and mobilisation from the margins.

Chapter 2 | Critical Approaches to National Language Teaching

In order to fully understand the political dimension of language policies on migration, this chapter will look at how relations of domination are reproduced through the language taught in official classes, not just through the exclusions and hierarchies that language tests introduce. In order to do so, the first part of this chapter will deal with some material from such language classes showing how language is taught through views and representations of migrants in specific social positions, how it seeks to teach about legality and illegality, and how it reproduces racist stereotypes.

After having seen how language can be taught in ways that seek to maintain the given order, the question left open will be whether it is equally possible to teach the language in a way that would challenge domination, where students rather than being pushed back into specific social positions would come to challenge and transform these. Within the broader area of radical and critical education, this chapter will deal with authors that have applied the theories of Paulo Freire, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jacques Rancière to the teaching of language to migrants (Bourdieu, 1991; Freire, 2000 and 1985; Rancière, 1991). These theories, though somewhat diverse in their understanding of power and domination, all share a political approach to (language) teaching, an approach that sees education as central not only to the reproduction but also to the challenge of oppression, and thus look to develop methodological resources for a transformative aim. I will both

look at theoretical literature on critical language teaching, and at the work of scholars and language teaching practitioners who analyse the implications of the teaching and learning of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) on migrants' lives in the UK (Baynham et al., 2007; Cooke, 2009; Cooke & Simpson, 2008; Roberts & Cooke, 2009) and its actual translation into transformative action (English for Action, 2013a, 2013b). While these studies vary in terms of geographical focus and theoretical frameworks, they share an understanding of the political and social significance of teaching language to migrants, and have the merit of thinking critically about it. The focus of critical and radical pedagogies on the political character of methodologies of language teaching and their implications for social change will bring in a seriously important contribution for understanding the politics of language in relation to migration. Yet, I will conclude by showing that an additional step is needed in order to make sense of whether and how agency through language is possible from the margins, which tends to be left unexplored or merely assumed in most of this scholarship. Groups like English for Action do give evidence of students' agency, calling for, I will argue, a further analysis of when and how transformation from the margins does take place and can be read as such, beyond the call for a specific methodology of English teaching.

Reproducing social order through language

As argued in Chapter 1, the political dimension of language policies on migration goes beyond the exercise of exclusion and control to encompass the reproduction of ideologies and hierarchies of belonging. In this chapter, I am introducing a further, important implication, that is, the role of language in the maintenance of the existing social order, understood as the maintenance of both existing social divisions and of social cohesion. Social order reproduction is easily subsumed under the more or less

overt purposes of testing migrants' language knowledge for citizenship. On the one hand, as previously exposed, language tests are commonly advocated by politicians as means to foster social cohesion and integration. On the other hand, such tests also work to reproduce a social order in which only a restricted number of privileged migrants (i.e. those who have the means and the economic and cultural capital to pass the test) can have access to full rights, and in which governments have control over the whole process. Indeed, as Shohamy argues, tests in general are a powerful and established tool used by the elites for the maintenance of the social order, and therefore trusted by the governments as a means to control migration (Shohamy, 2009, p. 50).

Beyond exploring the links between language testing and the maintenance of the social order, the arguments deployed to counter language tests do not directly touch upon the role of dominant, official language itself in the reproduction and maintenance of social inequalities, by means of both testing *and* teaching. Generally, while the literature on language testing does tackle domination through the promotion of national EU language(s) over others in the linguistic market (Wodak, 2010) and through the assumption of the value of monolingualism for social cohesion and national unity (Blommaert, 2006; Shohamy, 2009), it does not point at how domination works internally to the very national language(s), due to the strong divisions of value held by its higher and lower class and/or by its racialised or ethnicised variants (Bourdieu, 1991). Wanting to take a close look at the meaning of imposing the acquisition of national language knowledge to migrants, it is indeed important to analyse this national language in its political implication and embeddedness, together with how it is reproduced as dominant. The official language tested and taught is not just dominant in respect to the first languages of the migrant: it is also the language mastered by the educated, middle and upper-class amongst those, whose first language is the national one, and it is opposed to the dialects or slang that the lower classes (or ethnicised and racialised minority groups like South East Asian or Black British people in the UK) are

more likely to use. Official language is thus a *specific*, legitimate language that is deeply embedded in the social divisions it reflects. This language is not only reproduced through testing, but also, and particularly, through the education system, and through official language classes, which are in turn only accessible to certain groups. Therefore, it seems crucial to expand the analysis of language in the context of migration to encompass how the reproduction of the social order takes place through official language classes themselves. This could be, for example, by means of using methodologies that favour those who were exposed to official (and westernised) education systems in their countries of origin, and who therefore hold greater 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1991; Curry, 2007) or by means of negation (i.e. by not teaching certain parts of the language, thus relegating them to the unspeakable or undignified).

Mary Jane Curry, for example, reflects on the effects of cultural capital in her study of a US community college English basic writing course, attended by migrants and refugees (Curry, 2007). By means of participant observation, and interviews with tutors and students, Curry concludes that pupils with greater 'cultural capital', stemming from their own or their spouses' degree of prior education, have much better 'classroom participation', 'curricular' and 'institutional' competences, which allow them to better understand and follow western dominant language teaching practices and methodologies, and also to do better than others in obtaining language qualifications (Curry, 2007). Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital is meant to provide a tool to indicate how unequal access to power and resources is linked to the value that educational baggage has on the market. Accordingly, Curry deploys this notion in order to argue against the mere measuring of dominant language knowledge in applicants for higher education in the US, and suggests building on the greater cultural capital of some and developing the lacking cultural capital of others instead (Curry, 2007). Curry provides an example of the way dominant language teaching fosters the reproduction and maintenance of existing social divisions through indirectly privileging students who

already possess greater cultural capital. The complex interplay of cultural capital and educational competences affecting language learning that Curry points at also shows how an analysis of how language is taught is necessary to unveil the wider role of language in the reproduction of the social order, which is at the basis of its deployment for controlling migration.

In order to now explore some examples of how the language taught in official language classes engages in the maintenance of the social order, it may be useful to look at the case of the UK, where since 2005 most non-EU migrants wishing to apply for indefinite leave to remain, and nearly all¹³ migrants wishing to apply for citizenship “need to show that they have a good knowledge of language and life in the UK” by passing a test called 'Life in the UK' (UK Border Agency, 2013a). The UK Border Agency explains that a 'good' level is what is called 'level 3' and migrants can check whether they possess it by looking at an online tutorial and making sure they fully understand it. If they don't, they must “pass a course in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) which contains citizenship material” (UK Border Agency, 2013a). The courses recommended by the UK Border Agency follow a specific national curriculum, and are different from other classes teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), in that they aim at teaching people from a variety of different cultural and educational background the English they need to work, to function and to stay in the UK (rather than teaching other countries' residents how to speak English as a second language for a variety of other purposes) (Cambridge English Language Teaching, 2013). In other words, one can argue that they teach migrants the English they need to integrate. The curriculum for ESOL courses contains material on citizenship, which is aimed at developing “the learners' knowledge of life in the UK, help them become more active citizens and support applications for citizenship and settlement” (Home Office et al., 2010a). Indeed, such materials include

¹³ Except applicants over 65 and people with “long-term physical or mental condition that prevents [them] from learning English or from taking the test” (UK Border Agency, 2013b).

how to apply for a job or how to do an interview, how to read a wage slip, how to contact your MP, how to volunteer, how to use the health system, and how to find accommodation (Home Office et al., 2010a). Moreover, the course material entails learning about immigration and asylum laws and regulations, about anti-discrimination laws, women's rights and about human rights legislation (Home Office et al., 2010a). Considering its content, such courses are clearly aimed at creating 'active citizens', who would function and participate in society, through abiding by its laws and learning their rights.

To understand better the working of these classes it will be useful to directly look at some of the Citizenship Materials for ESOL learners available online (Home Office et al., 2010b). In the materials used to teach how to speak about one's and other people's job, one finds clues to guess a number of occupations: Sales Assistant, Secretary, Farmer, Mechanic, Waiter, Hairdresser, Teacher, Waitress, Dentist, Chef, and Fire Fighter (Home Office et al., 2010). Of course, these are not meant to be an exclusive list of possible jobs. However, the choice seems to be oriented towards semi-skilled jobs (with the exception of the Dentist¹⁴): probably the jobs that migrants are more expected (or desired) to get. Yet, jobs like sex worker, domestic or care worker, or street seller are not included in the list, probably because of the gendered and sexualised dimension of the former three, and because of their 'informal', or in some cases criminal connotations, which also make them the jobs that are most expected to be carried out by undocumented migrants.

Before drawing any conclusion, I will look at one more piece of material, a tape script that is supposed to teach students about Immigration law:

At the moment, you can come to the UK if:

- you have a work permit;

¹⁴ It is of interest to point out that the UK National Health Service highly benefits from imported skilled migrant labour, and the percentage of migrant dentists, doctors and nurses working in the UK is generally very high (Cadwalladr, 2010; Butler, 2008).

- you have a visa – for tourist/visitor/or medical reasons;
- you are the husband or wife of a permanent British resident, or citizen;
- you are an EU citizen;
- as soon as you arrive, you apply for asylum;
- you come under a Gateway Protection programme (...)

(Home Office et al., 2010c)

The above material is obviously meant to teach how migrants can legally enter the UK. The possibility for migrants and asylum seekers to enter the country through unofficial channels, to apply for asylum at a later stage, or the fact that many migrants do work and stay in the UK without working visas or documents and have to find alternative ways of making a livelihood, are not mentioned at all. And actually, they are not supposed to be mentioned. Through teaching about what (or who) is legal and what (or who) is not, and through teaching migrants what are 'proper jobs' and what are not by omitting the latter from the teaching content, these classes purposely engage in constructing the desired and 'integrated' migrant, the one worthy of applying for the right to stay or for citizenship.

Unveiling the way language works in shaping and underpinning social divisions amongst migrants themselves opens up the spectrum of analysis beyond the divide between the legitimate, good citizen and the migrant other. The language taught is a language of rights and obligations aimed at consolidating beliefs and consensus over legality and legitimacy as well as over illegality and illegitimacy, and in so doing, it engages in the reproduction of the social order whose existence depends on such beliefs and consensus. I am here referring specifically to Bourdieu's understanding of consensus and beliefs of legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1991). According to the philosopher, consensus and common beliefs are workings and attributes of the dominant doxa, the unquestioned representation of the order of things. Through repeated and incorporated

practices (*habitus*) as much as through the reproduction of the dominant *doxa* as a system of self-evident, universal truths feeding on common beliefs and consensus, the social order as it is is maintained and its arbitrariness is concealed. In this case, the consensus over the self-evidence of the existence of laws that determine the legality of persons depending on their migration status gets obviously reproduced through making them the content of a language course, that is, apparently objective and neutral knowledge.

In a less subtle fashion to the 'Skills for Life' English classes for migrants in the UK, in 2004 Germany restructured its immigration regulations, making of the attendance and completion of an unequivocally named 'Integrationskurs' the necessary step to gain a permanent residence visa permit, or to acquire citizenship. The Integrationskurse encompass 660 to 960 hours of language and 'orientation' class¹⁵, to be delivered by government-affiliated and/or authorised language schools, migrant centres and job-centres, and they are to be completed through reaching level B1 of the CEFR¹⁶, assessed by a language test. These Integrationskurse explicitly target migrants who have to yet “integrate in the economic, social and cultural life of the German Federal Republic” (Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2004, my translation). The State may partially or fully finance the lessons, which are imposed onto all non-EU migrants who are entitled to apply for a residence permit, (either by being spouses or parents of German citizens, or by having been granted asylum, or by holding a work visa). In specific circumstances, EU migrants' attendance may also be funded –i.e. when it can be proven that “they haven't managed to integrate in the economic, social and cultural life of the German Federal Republic without the help of the State” (Bundesministerium der Justiz, 2004,

¹⁵ The hours were increased from 645 and 945 to 660 and 960 in February 2012. This was also argued as further fostering integration, whilst it was accompanied by a price increase, making the additional financial gain for the state around 3 millions euros (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2012, p. 2). See Chapter 3 for a further overview of the German classes system for migrants.

¹⁶ See Chapter 1.

my translation). The sincerity of the German government's decision to overtly and necessarily link language teaching with teaching migrants how to integrate is telling, and it can be seen as already corroborating the above argument that official language classes be the platform through which to create and reproduce the proper, 'good' migrant. However, rather than producing 'integration', these classes seem to be reproducing difference and inequality reinforcing the divide between migrants and 'real' Germans. The Integrationskurse are not only to be attended by new arrivals, but they are also to be enforced on migrants who have long made of Germany their 'home' if they want to extend their permits or obtain citizenship, hence sending the unequivocal message that "integration in Germany means to constantly be under examination and to have to prove the worthiness of one's presence in the country, rather than participation in society" (zur Nieden, 2009, pp. 126, my translation). Important to notice is that, since 2007, the completion of an Integrationskurs also became obligatory for migrants prior to their actual entry into the country. In other words, migrants have to be already 'integrated' before migrating. According to Birgit zur Nieden, this shows how the German discourse on integration reproduces the contraposition between a given, allegedly homogenous national community and individuals and groups alien to it and defined over their 'lack' of knowledge and thus inferiority and debt toward society (zur Nieden, 2009, pp. 127).

Hence, German classes themselves, not only the final tests, have become a further border, a crucial instrument for the control and management of migration. Language teachers in Germany are indeed expected to control the validity of the documents of the students and report daily on their attendance to class (low attendance can lead to failure and rejection of residence applications) (zur Nieden, 2009, p. 134). Beyond highlighting how language classes are used as instruments of control, hierarchisation and exclusions as much as language tests, the German example gives also evidence of the work of reproduction of domination and social order in the very language taught within the

Integrationskurse.

One of my interviewees, G., a German teacher at the 'Worldword' language school in Germany, which (despite?) its radical left wing history and orientation, also offers Integration and Orientierungskurse, complained about the books that the government imposes for their lesson, remarking that they frame a monolithic German culture and at times entail Islamophobic indications (G., 2011). In general, according to G., the materials and books used for Integrationskurse have actually worsened since 2005, in terms of presenting an even more culturally homogeneous Germany, which works in racist and Islamophobic ways. For example, in a book written in the early 90's and not adopted anymore, a whole unit was dedicated to a non-white German hip-hop band, 'Advanced Chemistry', and some texts of their political songs were included (one of the most famous songs was called 'Alien in Your Own Country'¹⁷ denouncing racism and the fact that because of non-white appearance one is constantly mistrusted as 'real German'). G. pointed to the fact that nowadays such things are not imaginable in course-books (G., 2013). Rather, you find whole sections on Christmas, or reading exercises that reproduce racist stereotypes such as the one in the widely used book 'Aspekte', where an old lady who was mugged describes the thief as short and dark, with a moustache (Koithan & Lösche, 2008, p. 88).

During one of our meetings, G. showed me a few books, and another example struck me as very similar to the material analysed for ESOL classes. It was a listening exercise that dealt with integration. The student had to listen and fill in what was being said. G. told me, in absence of the CD, that it all had to do with acceptance of religious differences and of the German culture, dressing and respect of different customs (G., 2013). Interestingly, included in this exercise were questions regarding the number of people with a migratory background in Germany; the country from which the majority of these came from; how many of those had German citizenship; and finally, how many had not

¹⁷ Originally: 'Fremd im eigenen Land', my translation.

finished high school or had no qualifications and how many were unemployed¹⁸ (Breitsameter & Aufderstraße, 2007). Including the latter questions in a section on integration which is clearly dedicated to the unilateral effort that needs to be done by 'migrants' themselves (in brackets as it includes even German citizens of different backgrounds), points to three main problems. First of all, the obvious reproduction of the migrant as 'other' who needs to adjust to a preexistent German culture and will never be considered German even if holding a German pass; second, the reproduction of negative conceptions about the lack of western education; and third, the thematisation of unemployment amongst 'migrants' (the quote reported was twice as much as for white, ethnic Germans), which clearly hides the experiences of migrant workers in informal sectors and negatively connotes migrants in general as failed workers. Having this value-loaded information as matter of fact language to be taught in an official class contributes to the reproduction and maintenance of the consensus and beliefs on existing hierarchical social divisions amongst migrants and between 'migrants' and 'Germans'.

After this brief insight into some of the materials of official classes in the UK and Germany, one can see how the language taught in these is far from neutral, and how these language classes may play a decisive role in the maintenance of a hierarchical order between the citizen-subject, the migrant other, and the accepted but never really belonging migrant. Hence, instead of further looking into the oppressive character of official language and official language classes, I would now attempt to achieve a more comprehensive overview of available reflections on language teaching and the realm of the political. Precisely because the language taught and how it is taught seem to play an important role for maintaining and consolidating hierarchies and inequalities, it is worth exploring whether they could also provide grounds to tackle or transform them. In order to start doing so, I will now turn to look at the pedagogy of language teaching and at

¹⁸ According to G., the percentage of unemployed migrants reported in the audiotape was over 50% (G., 2013).

how its possible use for engendering social change has been explored by scholars writing on this topic. As mentioned in Chapter 1, whilst language and language teaching should not be seen as a neutral practice, they should neither be exclusively seen as an oppressive enforcement on migrants who would be just happier without it. They can definitely prove empowering, as few would doubt knowledge to be. But, apart from the immediate empowerment that the mastering of a language can bring in the economic and social lives of the individual migrant, language knowledge could also be seen as fundamental for subject formation and for bringing about social change.

Critical and Radical Pedagogical approaches to language teaching to migrants

In order to investigate the possibility of change through language classes, it is worth turning to the field of critical language teaching and of participatory ESOL studies, where one can find attempts to disclose ways of ethical, critical and even transformative language teaching. Studies departing from critical or radical pedagogy¹⁹ view language teaching to migrants as a practice situated within historically, politically and socially constructed discourses; they disclose the relations of power that are reproduced through such discourses, and explore ways in which a critical approach and an awareness of these may lead to transformative action outside the classroom (Auerbach, 1986; Moreno-Lopez, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2004). In these studies, what is referred to as 'critical approach' is a range of methods that aim at engaging with and exposing the inequalities that are reproduced through institutionalised education systems, and generally through dominant discourses, acts and practices, as prerequisite to challenge them and to bring about social change.

¹⁹ The terms 'radical' and 'critical' pedagogies are often used interchangeably and both stem from the work of radical educators such as Paulo Freire. One tends to encounter the term 'critical' more often within theoretical discussions of pedagogies, whilst 'radical' is more common within research more specifically concerned with activism and social change through education.

Nearly all critical pedagogues that engage with language teaching and transformation refer and build on the work of Paulo Freire (Freire, 2000). In his 1970 seminal work 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', Freire argues that education does not have to be exclusively an instrument for the integration into the dominant system, but can also be the means by which the oppressed can engage in the "practice of freedom" (Freire, 2000, p. 34). This, however, can only happen if education starts from the experiences of the oppressed: quoting Freire, "the oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption" (Freire, 2000, p. 54). Freire's understanding of power is both negative and positive. The author believes that power works both "on and through people", which means that on the one hand it is internalised and reproduced by the oppressed themselves, and on the other hand it is always open to being resisted (Freire, 2000, p. 34). Domination is then not only the realm of authorities and state apparatuses, but it is also (and in this Freire resembles Bourdieu) reproduced through knowledge and cultural forms that want to silence the oppressed. For Freire, the oppressed often incorporates and actively refuses to challenge domination, because of how he/she internalised the latter. Differently from Bourdieu²⁰, Freire believes that it is possible to transform and challenge domination through radical education, where the educators' role consists first and foremost in understanding the lived experience of domination of the oppressed, for then accompanying and guiding the process of liberation that only the oppressed themselves can ultimately accomplish. This process has been called by Freire, together with radical educator Ira Shor 'dialogical method', where dialogue is seen as opposed to top down teaching, determined by the students experiences but "shaped by the teacher":

Dialogue is a way to recreate knowledge, as well as the way we learn. It is a mutual learning process where the teacher poses critical problems for enquiry. Dialogue rejects

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I will deal thoroughly with Bourdieu's theorisation of the possibility of change in Chapter 4.

narrative lecturing where teacher talk silences and alienates students. In a problem-posing participatory format, the teacher and students transform learning into a collaborative process to illuminate and act on reality. This process is situated in the thought, language, aspirations and conditions of the students. It is also shaped by the subject matter and training of the teacher, who is simultaneously a classroom researcher, a politician and an artist. (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 11)

As stressed in the introduction, dialogical communication is a fundamental theme of this work. However, differently to the dialogism that will be explained at later stages²¹, the dialogical methodology of Freire is concentrating on spelling out and acting upon, through communication, what is already there (i.e. the reality of oppression of the students), rather than relying on the unexpected to trigger transformation. Indeed, Freire understands dialogue as a communicative, mutual process in which the students provide the grounding and material reality and experience for what is to be learned (and transformed), whereas the teacher 'shapes' it through his skills (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 11).

Many of the authors that I will look at now get inspired by Freire's student-centred approach in their development of radical pedagogies, driven by an understanding of oppressive power and domination as transformable through radical education.

I will go back to a critical address of Freire's understanding of domination for language teaching to migrants at a later stage as it seems, on the one hand, to be delivering too much importance to the educator whilst, on the other hand, assuming the existence of a 'true' experience (and possibly language) of the oppressed, which is to be found in order to generate change. Before this however, I will develop on critical pedagogical takes on language teaching.

²¹ I will first introduce the Bakhtinian understanding of dialogism in Chapter 4 for a clear unfolding of my arguments. For now it will suffice to say that its key element is that of bringing in agency, change, the new and unpredictable through interactive communication.

Critical language teaching for social change

The research and practice of critical pedagogies of Freirean influence for language teaching go back to the 80's, as the work of Elsa Auerbach on the participatory approach testifies (Auerbach, 1986, 1992). Referring to the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) and literacy education to migrants in the US, Auerbach opposes a participatory approach to the traditional ends-means approach, summarising it as being about: 1) the constant involvement of the students at every stage of the process; 2) the classroom as influencing the redefinition of what happens outside the classroom; 3) a focus on strengths rather than inadequacies; 4) the role of the teacher as problem-poser rather than problem-solver; 5) the content as coming from the social context; 6) the importance to look at language, literacy and culture as part of a process of critical reflection on education; 7) the content as also coming from the immediate context of the classroom; 8) linking individual experience to social analysis; 9) the goal being action outside the classroom, i.e. the content as “being meaningful to the extent that it enables learners to make change in their lives” (Auerbach, 1992, p. 31). Though Auerbach recognises the importance of Freire's pedagogy for participatory approaches, she also addresses the necessity for a continuous adaptation and reformulation of his ideas, according to the specific classrooms and in order to move beyond a view of the teacher as main actor of investigation of the social context of the students and thus determining the contents of the course (Auerbach, 1992, p. 27). The work of Auerbach is important to mention in her insistence on methodological steps to use language teaching as tool for change, pushing Freirean pedagogy further by challenging the role of the teacher as researcher and investigator.

Allan Luke, in his short essay 'Two takes on the Critical', looks at the possibility for a critical approach to language teaching, an approach also departing and expanding from Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (Luke, 2003). Luke values Freire's work and agrees

on the necessity of externalising, naming and reading one's oppression and the world in order to act upon them (Luke, 2003, p. 23) attempting to place language teaching in relation to the Freirean framework. To do so, Luke looks at second language teaching in its specificity – i.e. the diversity of habitus (Bourdieu, 1991) amongst and between students and teachers, which distinguishes the language classroom from a setting where everyone shares the experience of one dominant habitus (Luke, 2003, p. 23). These conditions may favour, according to Luke, a different, critical construction of otherness, beyond the imposition of national sameness. However, he concludes that there is an urgent need for a critical approach in teaching English to speakers of other languages insofar as it is largely a “pedagogical site and institution for educating the racial and linguistic other... into nation” (Luke, 2003, p. 28). Following Luke's line, the contributors to the 2004 publication 'Critical Pedagogies on Language Teaching' (edited by Bonny Norton and Keleen Toohey) argue that critical teaching practices in language teaching can and should entail reflections on power relations, both in terms of the specific histories of the students, and in terms of the reproduction of race, gender, and sexual stereotypes and oppressions within the classroom and through the teaching material. It is through such reflections that critical teaching methods can emerge that may produce social change through producing change in the classroom (Norton & Toohey, 2004). More concretely, Takayuki Okazaki, in his case study on an Intensive English Program in the Pacific Rim called 'Cultural Issues' which focussed on critical consciousness raising, argues that there are three main approaches to critical pedagogy in language teaching:

One approach is to take locally-situatedness seriously and negotiate with students the teaching methods suitable to a particular class. Another approach is to focus on the educational process and address the issues of power, discourse, and knowledge. The last approach is to connect the content, students' lives, and the larger context where students

find themselves through engaged dialogues. (Okazaki, 2005, pp. 194-195)

Okazaki argues that teachers should use a combination of the three approaches when preparing curricula that would inform “those who experience privilege and/or disadvantage” (Okazaki, 2005, p. 195). Not only will such approaches provide tools for the liberation of the oppressed but they will also help the privileged to recognise and question their positions (Okazaki, 2005, p. 194).

Similarly to Okazaki, but more specifically looking at gender in its intersections with sexuality, age, race and class, Bonny Norton and Aneta Pavlenko review a number of classroom practices in the US, Canada and Japan, which are grounded in feminist pedagogies. Norton and Pavlenko maintain an understanding of gender as discursively and differentially constructed, rather than as an “individual variable” (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004, p. 504), and point out how feminist language teaching practices may include:

...flexible curricula that recognize the diversity of the students' needs, shared decision making in the classroom, teaching and learning that incorporate students' life trajectories, pedagogy that locates students' experiences and beliefs within larger social contexts, and practices that encourage students to imagine alternative ways of being in the world (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004, p. 512).

As one can see, the parallels between feminist pedagogy and the Freirean approach are evident, in that they both seek to transform dominant discourses and practices starting from methodologies centred on the students' lived experiences, which is seen as the starting point from which the consciousness needed for social change can be generated. As mentioned above, this is based on an assumption of a real and understandable experience of oppression that, once critically exposed rather than internalised and

reproduced, leads to taking consciousness and to acting to defy it.

Apart from Freire-inspired and feminist pedagogies, the theories about language, symbolic power, education and cultural capital of Pierre Bourdieu have also influenced a number of works looking for further ways of understanding and then transforming society through literacy education (Albright & Luke, 2007). Indeed, Bourdieu proves not only of central importance for theorising the meaning and implications of language policies for the maintenance of the social order, as seen above, but also for exploring informed and critical ways to approach language teaching.

Isabel Moreno-Lopez, refers to Bourdieu's critique of the education machine as main site of transmission of habitus, and argues that critical pedagogies are about subverting the systematic reproduction of the dominant social order that reflect the interests of the dominant classes (Moreno-Lopez, 2005). The author sees critical pedagogy as being about calling into question the authority of the teacher, basing education on mutual exchange, creating political subjects that engage in social criticism, whilst 'reinventing the role of power' through sharing power with students (Moreno-Lopez, 2005). While Moreno-Lopez refers to Bourdieu for her critique of the dominant education system, she still seems optimistic as to the way that simply challenging power relations in class would automatically generate social change outside the classroom. This arguable optimism actually resembles more a Freirean approach and it would not be arguable if one was to follow Bourdieu's understanding of the possibility of change and defiance of dominant power²². Later on in this chapter I will address the need for a more careful questioning of the possibility of agency and change through language, which is rather assumed than dissected in most critical pedagogy, not only in Moreno-Lopez.

Rachel Grant and Shelley Wong, engaging perhaps more extensively than Moreno-Lopez with Bourdieu's conceptual framework, argue that the latter provides

²² See Chapter 4 for a more thorough exposition of Bourdieu's theory of domination and power.

fundamental tools in order to reframe teaching English as a second language (Grant & Wong, 2008). Using Bourdieu's understanding of legitimate, official language as reflecting economic, social and political power structures, Grant and Wong note that the legitimate 'speaker/listener' has been historically classified as "White, European, or North American, even as these linguistic communities themselves became more overtly multi-lingual and culturally diverse" (Grant & Wong, 2008, p. 164). The authors contest the legitimacy of the dominance of the British or North American variants of English, which have been imposed as a consequence of colonisation, and point at the current effort in 'decolonising' language teaching by advocates of 'World Englishes' (who, amongst others, reclaim Black or Indian English as educated standards).

Grant and Wong also deploy the Bourdiean concept of misrecognition of authority, in order to explain how the right to speak and to be heard is seen as legitimately held by those with the more symbolic, cultural and economic power, and how a process of decolonisation should go through reclaiming the right to speak and to be heard by those who have not got it (Grant & Wong, 2008, p. 170). Further to that, the authors argue that power relations between learners and native speakers and amongst different learners run along axes of gender, class, race and ethnicity, which affect learners' proficiency and their access to the right to speak (Grant & Wong, 2008, p. 172). In order to extend the right to speak to those dispossessed of it, language education has to include the fostering and recognition of the mother language of the students, by means of teaching English as an 'additional' language and using materials that include the other languages spoken in class (Grant & Wong, 2008, p. 178). Grant and Wong finally point out how a Bourdiean approach to education will allow not only understanding why and how social inequality informs education, but it will also provide a "framework for transformation" (Grant & Wong, 2008, p. 177). Such transformation is grounded in contesting the supremacy of certain languages over others, in dismantling language stereotypes, in infusing the curriculum and the academy with the voices of "minority-language speakers, 'working

class', descendants of slaves, colonised and oppressed people" (Grant & Wong, 2008, p. 175). Grant and Wong advocate teaching minority languages and valorising minority accents as part of their pedagogical, transformative language teaching programme. Like Moreno-Lopez, they seem to assume the possibility of generating change through exposing the workings of domination and oppression, as they not only show how inequalities are inscribed onto official language(s) but also argue that by changing the language(s) taught and how it is taught one can engage into resisting and challenging dominant power (Grant & Wong, 2008, p. 179).

Nicholas De Genova's ethnographic account of his work as an English language teacher for Latino migrant factory workers in the US presents an important contribution to the reflection on power in critical language teaching (De Genova, 2005). De Genova, though appreciating and adopting the dialogical approach of Freire's pedagogy, criticises his epistemic naivety, which insists on the possibility of resolving the "teacher-student contradiction" (De Genova, 2005, p. 29). According to De Genova, the biggest limit of Freire is that he chooses to ignore the persistence of social inequalities between educated teachers and working class, racialised migrant students, which cannot be done with, assuming the possibility of equality in dialogue (De Genova, 2005, p. 30). De Genova goes on arguing that:

Teaching English as a second language to Mexican/migrant workers, for whom their own Spanish language was itself one of the objects of their racialisation, clearly involved teaching (...) the language of their oppression, and thus playing an active role in the mediation of that larger process by which their own language was rendered "inferior". (De Genova, 2005, p. 48)

De Genova points out that an evident expression of the inferiorisation of the Spanish

language is to be found in a very common dogma that permeates official language teaching: the deployment of the method of full-immersion. Such 'immersion' in the English language is rather a 'drowning' in it, an expression of authoritarianism in the inculcation of language through countless repetition of English catchphrases, which dispossesses the students of any capacity of playing a role in their education, and sets out from the start the epistemic, necessary inferiority of the students by implying that they know nothing (De Genova, 2005, p. 50)²³.

Coming to the conclusion that using only English in class would never permit the kind of Freirean dialogue that he was seeking to reinvent, De Genova resolves to make extensive usage of Spanish in his classes, and to question the very language he was teaching and the reasons for it. During his teaching, he began every class with the following question: "Why should you bother to learn English?" (De Genova, 2005, p. 50). The resulting answer were nearly always reconfirming the inseparable link Luke was warning about (Luke, 2003) between language teaching to migrant and assimilation into nation: "it is important because it is the language of the country we live in, it is the language here"(De Genova, 2005, p. 50). De Genova, however, also reveals that something else emerged from the answers of the students: the importance of knowing the language to defend oneself against the police, against the boss at work, and in general against the authority (De Genova, 2005, pp. 51-52).

Taking that as a starting point, while having made explicit the usually normalised dominance of the English language, De Genova engaged in the creation, in dialogue, of course contents that corresponded to the needs, problems and experiences of the students, as they formulated them. De Genova concludes by noting how

The participants posed practical problems for their own second-language learning, consciously and critically apprehended the English vocabulary (...) that would serve

²³

This argument was already encountered above, in Birgit zur Nieden's analysis of German Integrationskurse.

them, and collectively generated much of the language themselves – in both Spanish and English. (De Genova, 2005, p. 52)

De Genova's preoccupation with the existence of undeniable social inequalities between educated teacher and working class students resurfaces when he recalls how the students were aware of and naming the difference of social class between him and them, which suggests the possibility of dialogue along different positionalities. This, on the other hand, does not preclude the possibility for the students to develop their own language, rather than the one imposed by the teacher/ curriculum.

Whilst I could not find evidence of its application for theorising or practicing language teaching, De Genova's criticism of the methodological presumption of lack and ignorance of the students links to the theories of a French Philosopher who wrote very interesting work on education: Jacques Rancière (Rancière, 1991). Rancière's theory is worth mentioning here as it questions all form of 'transmittable' or explainable knowledge from teacher to students, and locates the roots of the reproduction of inequalities in the very assumption that inequality needs to be the starting point, and equality the end-goal of education. In his work 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster', Rancière argues for a Cartesian turn in the approach of all educative practice: the equal knowledge or ignorance of everyone involved. According to Rancière, any pedagogical practice, whether normative, critical or radical, that attempts to 'explain' something on the basis of the teachers' knowledge and of the student's lack thereof, necessarily reconfirms the inequality between them (Rancière, 1991). To say it with Caroline Pelletier, for Rancière "the ignorant cannot tackle their powerlessness by gaining knowledge, but rather by contesting the hierarchy which prevents their speech from being heard" (Pelletier, 2009, p. 148).

In this respect, one could say that for Rancière, the way to tackle social inequalities is

through a radical shift in pedagogy, which would rather differ from the aim to 'emancipate' the students, and be much more about opening up the space for the "anarchy of the democratic circulation of knowledge" through tackling hierarchical approaches to knowledge (Rancière, 2005, p. 69). In this sense, Rancière addresses the problem of the power relation between teacher and student from a different perspective than the authors considered so far. Instead of trying to tackle such hierarchy through 'student centred' methods developed by the teachers or through their mediation (as Freirean pedagogues do), he invites educators to challenge their position as knowledgeable by leaving the learning process in the (knowledgeable) hands of the students, who are not seen as those 'lacking knowledge' anymore.

If one was to follow Rancière then, the resulting pedagogy would be pushing beyond a Freirean emancipatory discourse, towards a possibly more open and uncertain but more egalitarian approach. Indeed, it would not imply the central role of the emancipator for the liberation of the emancipated, which would end up reconfirming a hierarchy of knowledge and thus reproduce the dependence of the dominated, but it would tackle the hierarchical understanding of knowledge itself. Rancière's egalitarian approach to pedagogy would not work however without the assumption of the possibility for the dominated or oppressed to develop an own language, and for specific methodologies to generate change. MORE

In Freirean critical pedagogies for language teaching, students' agency seems at times to be needing the fostering of a specific methodology, whilst the possibility of agency through language is generally rather assumed, than argued for. Considering this, migrants' own acts to foster change are rather absent from these accounts. In order to start setting the terms to look into the possibility of such agency, which will be more specifically dealt with in Chapter 4 and 5, it will be useful to report the work of practitioners and scholars that provide evidence of migrants' agency within language classes. In the next chapter, after introducing the field of ESOL studies, I will go to

analyse very interesting developments in language teaching to migrants in the UK. These, although they do not theoretically disclose the conditions of possibility of migrants' agency through language from the margins, do provide clear examples that indicate this possibility. What has been rather assumed so far will be now illustrated in concrete examples of migrants' agency, which will in turn need further theoretical explanations.

Participatory ESOL, radical methodologies and community action

The existing literature on critical or radical pedagogies in relation to language teaching considered above is predominantly stemming from Australia, Canada and the US. In the geopolitical context of this research –i.e. the EU, there seems to have been far less academic engagement with critical pedagogies, social change and language teaching to migrants, if one excludes the English speaking context of the UK. Indeed, in the UK there is a relatively consistent scholarly production of articles on ESOL teaching as a practice and on participatory ESOL, which looks at how different, student-centred methodologies, material and internal class dynamics can change those English for Speakers of Other Languages classes analysed in the previous section (Baynham, 2006; Baynham et al., 2007; Baynham & Simpson, 2010; Cooke & Simpson, 2008; Phillimore, 2011). These works, on the one hand, appear to be more 'tutor oriented' by often including clear reference and guidance to specific classroom materials and activities. On the other hand, they focus on the functionality and usefulness of ESOL classes for asylum seekers, migrants and refugees, taking into account their specific lived experiences in the UK and also looking at how they show their agency, contributing to re-shaping the content of the classes by interrupting the flow of the lesson “bringing the outside into the classroom” (Baynham, 2006, p. 26). This scholarly

production is driven by the wish to make ESOL classes a more critical, beneficial and open learning environment. Most of these works are not explicit about being about engendering social change through radical pedagogies, as they rest in the realm of the ESOL framework (arguably because of its dependance from government funding). However, they do often call for participatory teaching methods, making arguments for the effectivity of these methods for the very learning process (Baynham et al., 2007); they stress the importance of addressing inequalities, racism, and the difficulties and barriers that migrants encounter; and indicate as great challenge for the teacher the fact that what happens in the classroom (in relation to challenging inequalities) should make a difference outside of it (Baynham, 2006, p. 28). Most importantly, within ESOL practice and ESOL studies, examples of migrants' agency within language classes and projects have risen, which explicitly address social change outside the classroom. In order to turn to these I would first set the context of ESOL scholarship and practice.

One interesting example of ESOL scholarship, is the work of Celia Roberts and Melanie Cooke, who, in their article 'Authenticity and the Adult ESOL Classroom and Beyond', expose the problem entailed in teaching 'real-life' scenarios using invented material, and argue instead for the use of 'authentic' materials (e.g. recordings of real dialogues and interactions) (Roberts & Cooke, 2009). In order to do so, they first remind that:

ESOL has (...) historically been concerned with teaching migrants to navigate interactions and literacy demands in, for example, health settings and street bureaucracies such as welfare offices and banks, and there is no doubt that this is a necessary part of instruction, especially for new arrivals. (Roberts & Cooke, 2009, p. 623)

The authors seem to depart from an understanding of the functionality of ESOL classes for migrants for learning how to operate in society by being able to use available

services and bureaucracies. Keeping that in mind, they note how made-up material does not reflect the difficulties and the challenges that migrants are likely to face in real-life situations. Such material “presents an idealised interactional world in which people use the same variety of standard English, everyone co-operates ...and all participants are equally legitimate speakers” (Roberts & Cooke, 2009, p. 624). Roberts and Cooke thus propose to use authentic recordings of, for example, job interviews, or doctor/patient consultations, in which it would become clear what type of narratives the interviewee/patient is expected to perform in order to gain credibility. Roberts and Cooke are aware of the problem of functionalism in language teaching to migrants, which they remember as having already been questioned, in the US context, by Auerbach (Auerbach, 1986) and Tollefson (Tollefson, 1986) for being underpinned by and for reproducing an image of migrants and refugees as welfare consumers, and for maintaining inequalities by socialising them into taking “their place as low-paid, low-grade workers” (Roberts & Cooke, 2009, p. 624). The authors maintain that it is important “to raise awareness of the interactional challenges they face outside the classroom and to explore these with the students” (Roberts & Cooke, 2009, p. 624).

While there is no doubt that learning about difficulties and unequal relational situations in society is important, in Roberts and Cooke's work, as in most theoretical production within ESOL scholarship, there does not seem to be a clear argument on when and how language learning, beyond informing about inequalities and marginalisation, may provide the means for students to challenge and transform these. Roberts and Cooke's argument for the use of 'authentic material', or generally the use of teaching methods centred on the students' experiences of exclusion, rarely accounts for the agency of the students in transformation, and when it does so, it assumes its emergence through the direct empowerment of language knowledge and of participatory methodologies.

However, importantly, the agency of the students is explicitly detected and analysed in some participatory ESOL studies. Mike Baynham, for example, sees such agency in the

capacity of students to interrupt the flow of the class, bringing about contingent responses by the teacher and pointing at the possibility of challenging the social order of the very classroom (Baynham, 2006, p. 27). Unfortunately, it is not clear or further explored in this scholarship, where the agency of the students through language comes from, and its relation to the differential positioning of power to the teacher. Most importantly, it seems to be resting on the level of individual empowerment, and it is not clear how change outside the classroom would take place.

On a quite unique note, in the UK, the possibility of migrants' agency, transformation from the margins, and involvement in social change through language learning becomes evident through one ESOL project that has developed Freirean teaching approaches, explicitly aiming to open up and discuss the problems and experiences of the students in the classroom and through doing so, facilitate students' own action to change these. I am speaking here of English for Action, a project that organises free ESOL classes in London and bases its methodology on the teaching of Reflect for ESOL (English for Action, 2013a; Reflect, 2009b).

Reflect for ESOL is a Freire-inspired participatory approach to adult learning and social change that was first developed in 1990 within projects of adult literacy in Bangladesh, Uganda and El Salvador (Reflect, 2009a). Reflect for ESOL was introduced in the UK in 2004, when the charity ActionAid started supporting the implementation of its approach in ESOL classes. Since then, trainings and dissemination events have taken place, and a number of colleges and adult education centres started applying the Reflect approach, including English for Action, and x:talk²⁴.

Reflect is about a student-centred approach where teachers are more facilitators than educators, where classroom roles are transformed and the "awareness of power

²⁴ I could not find data on the exact number of institutions and schools that adopted the Reflect approach between 2008 and 2013, but in the 'Reflect for ESOL Evaluation: final report' (Reflect, 2008) three different colleges in the UK are mentioned. Moreover, English for Action adopts this methodology, and x:talk, one of the projects analysed in this research, has had two training sessions with Reflect and English for Action in 2012 and has been including this methodology in its classes since.

dynamics and relations and the effect of this on participation and learning” are central (Reflect, 2008, p. 7). A very interesting aspect of Reflect is its insistence on the students' development of their own language, facilitated through the use of a wide range of visualisation tools, which would allow for expression outside of the limits of literacy and language knowledge. This is meant to help generate a vocabulary dictated by the students, thus more inherent to their experiences and needs, rather than dictated by the government through specific curricula. Finally, and most importantly for the sake of this research, is the fact that the Reflect approach includes extensive discussions, problem posing and analyses of the issues that come up in class which “lead learners to identify actions that they can take (individually or as a group) to improve their situation” (Reflect, 2008, p. 7).

A Reflect/Freirean approach is indeed the one adopted by the charity English for Action, which provides free English classes in community centres, faith institutions and schools, and whose aim is to explicitly use education as a tool for social change. On their website, English for Action write:

We help people to gain the language skills they need and support them to take action to improve their lives and their community. (English for Action, 2013a)

We have a unique pedagogy and years of experience delivering accessible community ESOL. Our teaching methods blend popular education and community organising techniques (...) We aim to give our participants the skills, knowledge and networks to effect change - along with the confidence to try. If a class wants to take collective action on an issue, we use community organising tools to help them do so. (English for Action, 2013b)

In Autumn 2010, English for Action, together with other ESOL teachers, students and general members of the public carried out numerous campaigns against the introduction

of the pre-entry language test for spouses and against the UK government's intended cuts to ESOL subventions, organising around a group called Action for ESOL (Action for ESOL, 2013). Though the pre-entry test for spouses was unfortunately adopted, at the end of August 2011, through lobbying, demonstrations, petitions and an ESOL festival, Action for ESOL have successfully got the government to U-turn on its new eligibility criteria which were to exclude 75% of adults on so called 'inactive' benefits (Action for ESOL, 2011). After this battle was won, the project went on, in view of the continued vulnerability of ESOL and it continues campaigning for migrants' rights and against changes in migration requirements such as minimum income for family reunification (Action for ESOL, 2012; Bryers, 2013). The coming together of migrant students, teachers and sympathisers against racist language tests and around the wish to defend the right to learn the language without having to pay for it, is indicative of a reality of resistance to language policies, that calls for the need to analyse further the possibility of agency and mobilisation despite and within the limits and constraints of language testing and teaching.

Indication of this reality of resistance of migrant communities within ESOL programmes can be further found in other actions undertaken within English for Action. For example, students and teachers contested the low recognition of value of their first languages by organising teach ins in the square of a primary school, where English students/parents paired up and taught their first languages to kids during 'identity week'²⁵. Moreover, students from English for Action also participated in a national 'Diaspora assembly' and are involved in campaigning for migrants' access to accessible, free and quality immigration legal advice (English for Action, 2013c).

Finally, in May 2013 the project produced a report commissioned by the British Council, which challenges common views on integration as a one-way or even two-way

²⁵ Amongst the languages taught were Pashtu, Bengali, Albanian, French, Vietnamese, Arabic, Somali, Spanish and Amharic. It is not stated when this exactly took place though the posting of news about it occurred in September 2013 (English for Action, 2013c).

process, but shows how it is rather seen by migrants/language students as a 'spaghetti-junction' where belonging makes little sense at a national level, but it is negotiated every day in a variety of different sites and settings, where change is constant but made difficult by felt barriers of racism, anti-immigration policies, poverty and language difficulties. (Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013, pp. 32-33)

The work of English for Action and Action for ESOL is important because it indicates the presence of what seems rather absent in most literature on language policies on migration and on critical language teaching to migrants, namely, the agency of the students and their mobilisation for their rights beyond personal empowerment. One of the teachers and founder of English for Action, Dermot Bryers, put forward the view that, within radical teaching approaches it is crucial for the teacher to recognise, challenge and problematise her position as leader, trying to facilitate the development of the students' own language and action, without having to be the instigator, or having an agenda on how this needs to happen:

In an ideal world the teacher would not even know what action takes place (Bryers, 2013)

The approach of English for Action is indeed one of facilitating mobilisation through fostering dialogue amongst students and letting them use and produce language. Though strongly influenced by the action oriented dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, this approach of seeing the teacher as facilitator and even wishing her 'ignorance' in matters of outcomes of the students' language acquisition for action strongly resembles Rancière's pledge for an unknowing, egalitarian teacher (Rancière, 1991). Indeed, in the 'Whose Integration?' report, a few main points on the role of the teacher in their classes are made clear. Reporting on two of their courses the authors of the report write:

Our explicit language work grew out of class discussions and built on students' existing linguistic skills and knowledge. Our lessons were not based on the introduction of new linguistic forms decided in advance. In this sense we were treating students as users of language as well as learners of language. (Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013, p. 28)

Students were initiators, not just passive recipients of instruction and at various points during the course they proposed games, organized the layout of the room, set up activities, decided on timings and breaks, negotiated the meanings of words and phrases, brought along topics for discussion and evaluated the course. At times the teachers were very much on the sidelines in these discussions. (...) (Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013, p. 29)

What is importantly indicated is that from the testimony of English for Action, students appear as subjects, while their agency within and through the language used is a central theme, together with their engagement in mobilisation. In this sense, the assumption of the possibility of creating and speaking an own language, and thus of having agency within language from social positions seemingly at the margins is present in the work of English for Action. However, unlike the literature analysed above, in this case concrete examples of such language are given. In the report quoted above, its authors tell how the students created expressions like “she's gone modern”, talking about a woman riding a bicycle; or “leave at the door”, to express the fact that in relation to different cultures or religions certain things are better not be spoken about; or “open gates”, to refer to the opposite of barriers to integration” (Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013, p. 14). While it is made clear that this language was created in the classroom and served as generative language to discuss issues around gender, migration and racism in the micro-community that the latter represented, it is also reported how this very language (and the reflections generated with it) made it outside of the class, being used in wider contexts (Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013, p. 20).

For its understanding of the politicality of language, pedagogy and methodology; for its focus on community action and mobilisation; and for the centrality of migrants' experiences and agency through language, English for Action represents a significant illustration of the need to enquire further into these topics. Whilst the scholarship analysed in the previous section deals with ways of engendering social change through language classes and pedagogies and needs the assumption of migrants' agency to do so without arguing for it or demonstrating it further, English for Action indicates that this agency is present. What emerges is the necessity to first of all analyse and explain the very possibility of such agency through language from the margins; and second, to disclose ways to read and identify the ways political transformation, and social change from the margin may emerge from and through language.

Methodology as key- the danger of a dualistic approach

Language teaching in the context of migration, as seen so far in this chapter, is neither a neutral process nor a completely controllable one. The classes, language and methodologies discussed suggest how language is not just a tool, but much rather a complex terrain of power, within which much is at stake. The language of official classes has highlighted how hierarchies, social order and divisions can be maintained and reproduced through them. At the same time, precisely because of their political character, language classes can also be possible sites of change and transformation. The above review of existing scholarship on critical and radical language teaching provides interesting insights into how language can be taught differently, with an awareness of internal and external power relations and hierarchies and facilitating transformation and social change outside of the classes. Although there are differences between a more purely Freirean approach (Auerbach, 1992; Luke, 2003; Reflect, 2009a) a Bourdiean

one (Grant & Wong, 2008) or a more strictly anti-hierarchical one (Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013; De Genova, 2005; Rancière, 1991), this work as a whole shares two main points of analysis. On the one hand, the recognition that language education and language knowledge are political and are about power and such power can be oppressive and reproduce the dominant social order. On the other hand, it shares a commitment to transform social relations, to challenge inequalities, whether through specific critical methods, through reversing the classroom roles, through problem posing, dialogue and discussions, or/and through presupposing the equality and extent of everyone's knowledge.

The arguments for social change through language teaching presented here are underpinned by a common understanding of the existence or of the possible development of an own language by the migrants/students, a language that would likely still be embedded in relations of power, but which could be used to actively transform these. This very idea of the possibility of appropriation or development of an own language by the 'oppressed', to say it in Freirean terms, raises the issue of agency. It would not be possible to bring about social change through either critical methodologies or through the active use of the students' own language without the assumption of the possibility of agency within language. Moreno-Lopez actually makes such assumption specific when she writes: "critical theorists examine how individuals can exercise agency to act upon their own destiny and interrupt the transmission of an oppressive *habitus*" (Moreno-Lopez, 2005, p. 1). Thus, whilst using Bourdieu to analyse the power of dominant classes, Moreno-Lopez presupposes that agency within language is neither questionable nor exclusively bound to dominant subjects in positions of power, but can rather be resisted and appropriated by oppressed subjects too.

Giving examples of agency through and with language by means of mobilisation emerging from language classes and of language created by the students, English for Action, at least through the words of its founder, Dermot Bryers, considers methodology

fundamental to fostering change through language classes:

Many people think that learning language is necessarily emancipatory but I don't think it's good enough, methodologies are really important. On the one hand, you can never control what people do with languages, on the other hand, if you challenge hierarchies with your teaching methods and you have a lot of silence where you allow people to take ownership of their classes, then it is much more conducive of having action rich classes. (Bryers, 2013)

Whilst Bryers also hints that change can unexpectedly be generated through language ("you can never control what people do with languages"), the approach of English for Action, like that of critical language pedagogies on the whole, because of its righteous and important commitment to education and knowledge as motor of change, seem to rely on the belief that it will be exactly through specific methodologies that change will take place, rather than through language per se and its politicality. While I do not want to exclude that this could happen, I do not think that transformation and social change can follow a template, regardless of how open and anti-hierarchical this might be. As I will argue through the rest of this work, education is crucial but it is not per se the/a successful way to defy domination, even within language.

The aim of this research is to inquire into the very possibility of agency from the margin within language, which cannot be made sense of simply through specific methodologies of language teaching. Rather, in order to disclose the theoretical basis through which to argue the possibility of radical change through language, I believe that a separate theoretical enquire into language and agency is needed. Without such analysis, these assumptions would also struggle to resolve to theoretical conclusions that would exceed and avoid strict dichotomies. One could argue that if methodology is what goes to determine the success of the development of a transformative 'language of the

oppressed', such language would necessarily be placed in dualistic contraposition to a dominant, oppressive language, for example the one that is reproduced through official language classes. Whereas, if agency in language was to be argued and defended per se, the emergence of subversive appropriation of or of transformation through language by the oppressed political subject could possibly take place even during official classes, i.e. within the language of domination. While the latter option theoretically and politically shows more potential than a dualistic conception, the criteria to define why and when subversion through language may happen would also need to be made explicit. This is yet not to say that one needs to look for specific methodologies as the key to gaining agency and enacting resistance through language (which is what these authors seem to imply), but rather that once agency in language is postulated, it is necessary to find ways to detect, and read, its transformative outcomes. These cannot be specific methodologies only, unless one believed in the possibility of creating change and disruption by act of will. According to an anonymous practitioner of Freirean ESOL pedagogies, who contributed to the 2012 Radical Education Workbook:

it is important for me to remember that Freirean pedagogy is not a blueprint, not a set of instructions that can be followed with guaranteed success in every context. In the process of remaking a Freirean pedagogy for our particular context, we cannot escape the need to remain in dialogue with students and colleagues, and on the necessity of genuine ongoing critical reflection on our pedagogical practice. (VV.AA., 2012)

Indeed, this is not an argument for relativism regarding different methodologies. It is rather calling for a deeper scrutiny of why specific methodologies seem to foster change better than others, of where the possibility of transformation in language lies, beyond the mere pushing of non-hierarchical approaches that may even risk obscuring existing imbalances of power.

Because of their evidence oriented and not explicit theoretical backbone on language and agency, critical pedagogies would benefit from a thorough analysis of the conditions of possibility of migrants' political subjectivity and political mobilisation within and through language.

In order to engage in such a theoretical analysis of language and agency it will be helpful to refer to more examples of migrants' political mobilisation around and through language classes, beyond the more or less official ESOL classes discussed above. With the important exception of English for Action, which does not require money or documents of migrants wanting to join, and it is therefore consciously more accessible and engaged in breaking down and contesting anti-immigration policies that criminalise persons beyond acts (Bryers, 2013), most of these scholars do not address, or at best only minimally address, the issue of illegalised migration. In general, what was not taken into consideration so far, is the issue of accessibility to language classes and the presence of hierarchies and different positionalities of migrants and teachers and amongst migrants themselves, not only because of their gender, class and race, but also (and obviously intrinsically connected and intersecting with these categories) because of their migration status and of the degree of criminalisation of their work and personas. It seems to me indispensable to look at whether and how those who are the least likely to be able to access official language education may act as political subjects within and through language learning and language itself.

Summing up, this chapter has started showing the important political aspect of language and language classes, that is, how they can be and are used both for the reproduction of order and for engendering change. Critical and radical pedagogies and ESOL scholarship bring in important observations about the necessity to scrutinise power relations reproduced within and through language teaching, and about how

methodologies can make a difference. However, there are four main unresolved issues that are stemming from this chapter's engagement with the politicality of language teaching: first of all, the issue of migrants' agency through language from marginal positions, that is, its possibility and implications; second, the danger of reproducing a dualism between domination and transformation within language and language classes; third, the necessity to develop analytical tools to read when and how transformation and change take place; and fourth, the largely insufficient engagement with differential access to classes for different status migrants. The availability and composition of and accessibility to language classes are fundamental aspects to be considered if one is to look at transformation from the margin through these. Indeed, this will be the content of the next chapter, whilst the rest of the thesis will be dedicated to the unravelling of the remaining issues just mentioned.

Chapter 3 | Language Classes for Migrants – Availability and Access

Language classes, official and legitimated as much as alternative and inspired by critical pedagogies are inscribed in a specific social order, which in turn relies on specific policies, laws, economic and social relations for its reproduction. In order to analyse their possible role in the challenge to existing social order, it is therefore necessary to inscribe language classes in the political, social and economical contexts in which they take place: in the case of this research diversely regulated (and criminalised) migration in the EU, more specifically in three EU destination countries. Connected to this, it requires asking questions regarding the actual composition of the classes and consequently their accessibility. For any study that deals with the potential of education for social change it seems crucial to establish who the students attending and accessing the classes are. In this chapter, I will look at the history, context and provision of language classes, official and not, in the three EU countries that considered more closely in this thesis. Not only subsidised classes by the state, or the already mentioned project English for Action will be considered, but also some more examples of what I call 'alternative language classes', classes organised by political organisations that work for the rights of undocumented migrants (Asociación de Sin Papeles, or ASP), of migrant sex workers (x:talk), and an official school that, like English for Action, provides classes open to undocumented migrants, and teaches the language in a

politically aware way (Worldword). Object of consideration will be all the various factors that hinder accessibility to classes, including but also exceeding documented enrolment, funded participation and fees. The aim is to inscribe language classes in the social order in order to consider the importance, as well as the limits and fragility of projects that see the politicality of language as central to their wider political work. Analysing the conditions and context of existence of these projects is a necessary step in view of the central question of the thesis, which is analysing political change through language from the margins. Indeed, looking at how and by whom classes are accessed is necessary for indicating both who the possible actors of change are, and the conditions within which, because of which, or despite which such change may take place.

Provision and accessibility of official language classes in the UK

Discourses on the connection between migrants' ability to speak the national language and social cohesion have become common throughout the EU. However, language policies regarding migration, the provision of subsidised language classes and their accessibility for different status migrants vary to an extent from country to country.

If one looks at the UK, for example, language teaching to migrants refers to the provision of ESOL, i.e. English classes aimed for migrant people seeking to reside or already settled in the UK. Government funded ESOL classes have been in place since the 1960s, when an Immigration Act allocated for the first time funding to local governments to provide language teaching services for migrants from the commonwealth (mainly migrant labour force from Caribbean and India, and forced East African Asian migrants from Uganda). Since then, in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, access to the government funded classes was extended to migrants coming from areas of conflicts such as Latin America and Vietnam, and subsequently from Eastern Europe,

North Africa and the Middle East (Hamilton & Hillier, 2009; Rosenberg, 2007).

ESOL classes were from the start seen as a response to an 'immigration problem', and until the 1990s they were indeed funded by the Home Office, rather than by the Department for Education and Skills (Hamilton & Hillier, 2009). After their insertion in the 'Skills for Life' national policy for the improvement of adult literacy and numeracy in 2001, ESOL started to get funded by the Department for Education and Skills. However, important it was to be included within a broader educational framework, this shift also meant that lack of English knowledge was being understood as lack of basic skills, as deficiency, hence levelling and ignoring different migrants' educational, skilled and knowledge backgrounds (Hamilton & Hillier, 2009).

Until the early 2000s, the British government had pursued a policy of 'unofficial pragmatic multiculturalism', which shifted towards a focus on social cohesion, integration and 'Britishness' after the so-called 2001 'race riots', and later as a reaction to the 2005 London bombings (Aspinall & Hashem, 2011). Such shift obviously influenced language policies: translation services were criticised for lessening migrants' incentives to learn English, and ESOL classes and English knowledge requirements became an important focus of UK's migration policies, which implemented obligatory language tests and started focussing on community cohesion as a criterion to allocate targeted ESOL provision. Although it was known that ESOL waiting lists were very long and that the demand largely exceeded the supply of courses, the New Labour government announced the introduction of a cap to the funding allocated to ESOL provision, which sparked protests and debates, but was finally implemented in 2007 (Kingston, 2008; Sullivan, 2011).

In 2009, the New Labour government launched its 'New Approach to ESOL', which moved ESOL provision from its position of centrality within the 'Skills for Life' project to the coordination of councils and local authorities (Aspinall & Hashem, 2011). This new approach was specifically meant to support community cohesion and integration

policies and it therefore resolved that councils were the most apt bodies to identify those groups of migrants in most urgent need of ESOL, i.e. 'hardest to reach' and isolated. As Aspinall and Hashem pointed out, this move, which was not accompanied by any increase in funding available for ESOL, meant that for a couple of years the choice of 'target groups' (e.g. young Yemeni women, young men who had recently gained refugee status, Somali women with no English, migrant women with young children etc.) fell on "small polyethnic communities" of recently arrived migrants and asylum seekers (Aspinall & Hashem, 2011, p. 156). The authors of the 2011 article 'Responding to minority ethnic groups' language support needs in Britain' point out that using community cohesion rather than language needs as main ESOL policy lead to discretion in the choice of target groups, and these choices were not backed by a record of specific reasons, or by data on the actual need and demand for English classes for different groups (Aspinall & Hashem, 2011, p. 145).

Since the coming to power of the Conservative and Liberal-Democrats in 2010, policies on ESOL in the UK have been subject to further major changes. The funding of ESOL was moved to the recently formed Skills Funding Agency, which is responsible for the promotion of adult further education (Skills Funding Agency, 2012; The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2012). ESOL had been finally unlinked from being about migrants lacking basic knowledge, but what this rather led to was further restriction to the free provision of ESOL. The coalition government indeed applied austerity measures to ESOL funding and it proposed further cuts and restrictions of access to funding for migrants not on 'active benefits' (i.e. actively looking for work), putting at risk 250,000 ESOL places (Sullivan, 2011). The obvious huge exclusions that these measures would have caused sparked organised protests and actions coordinated through Action for ESOL, which organised demonstrations, wrote letters to MP's, and lobbied in parliament (Action for ESOL, 2011). In August 2011 the government decided to make a U-Turn that meant the funding was 'only' withdrawn from migrants on

working tax credit, low-income workers not on benefits and people whose asylum claims had been rejected (Action for ESOL, 2011; Murray, 2011). The situation as of 2013 is an unchanged restricted access to funding for ESOL, and from 28th October 2013, as seen in Chapter 1, an increased level (B1) of English knowledge required from migrants applying for settlement and citizenship (UK Border Agency, 2013b).

In terms of ESOL classes functioning as an extension of government through attendance controls on students, some colleges (though not have to, as they are in Germany) do share their registers with the Job Centre, and students who are on Job Seeker Allowance can get sanctioned for low attendance (Bryers, 2013). As I will show in the next section, the situation of 'quality' controls of ESOL teachers and classes by government officials is also more relaxed than in Germany, with such controls happening once to twice a year (Bryers, 2013). Apart from being expression of different countries' differing systemisation of control, this is also likely linked to how in the UK attendance to language classes is not compulsory for all non-EU migrants seeking to reside, as it is in Germany. This is reflected in more relaxed attendance control mechanisms, and less government funding appointed to ESOL.

So far I attempted to sketch the history of policies around ESOL provision and funding in the UK, but the still open question remains: how many migrants get access to ESOL places in the UK? And who are these migrants?

A 2011 Association of Colleges survey reported that in 2009/2010 187,000 migrants were enrolled in ESOL classes, of which only 14% were in receipt of 'active' benefits, 9% were asylum seekers, while the remaining 99,000 students were in receipt of 'inactive' benefits (Mercer, 2011). Obviously, statistics on access to ESOL would not account for non-status migrants, but all of the data one can find point to the fact that demand and need for English classes amongst documented migrants and asylum seekers greatly exceeds the supply and availability of subsidised classes. In some areas only one

third of applicants gets a place, and in London in 2008 only one in four was accessing publicly funded classes (Aspinall & Hashem, 2011). According to the report 'Beyond Naturalisation: citizenship policy in an age of super mobility', published in 2008 in the UK by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) most refugees and migrants in the UK found it difficult to enrol on English courses because of long waiting lists, overlap of courses with working hours and lack of offer in rural areas (Rutter, Latorre, & Sriskandarajah, 2008).

In 2012, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education produced a report for the Mayor of London which looks at how the funding restriction affected access to ESOL; it problematises it in terms of integration of disadvantaged groups; and proposes alternative ways to fund these courses (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2012). From the report, it emerged that the cuts resulted in a general reduction of provision of ESOL courses by colleges in London, already in anticipation of the changes (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2012, p. 9). Most importantly, the report argued that the groups massively affected by these changes were:

- people with low-level English language and literacy skills;
- those with caring responsibilities who are economically inactive;
- those in low-paid work, who do not earn enough to afford course fees
- those on inactive benefits excluded from a provider's discretion to fully cover the course fees (e.g. Working Tax Credit, Asylum Support) (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2012, p. 10)

Apart from these, already excluded from the Skills Funding Agency before 2011 were: "Asylum seekers in the first six months of residence and spouses of persons with settled status in first three years of residence or 1 year if married to EEA national" (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2012, p. 11).

Whilst this report does not provide statistical data about the amount of migrant persons who would join classes if founded or on the language need and skills of migrants, it does not even mention the possibility of accessing classes by undocumented migrants. In such anti-immigration climate no statistical data will probably ever lead to a great increase of funding and provision of ESOL classes to non-status migrants. The growing tendency is to limit funded access to 'desirable' migrants, i.e. those who, if on benefit, are going to be soon inserted in the labour market, and those who are either in higher pay employment, or wealthier, and documented or on the path towards full legalisation. Those migrants whom access to ESOL classes is wished for, are however not merely 'entitled' to a right to English knowledge acquisition. The dominant discourse, backed by proposed legislations demands and expects that they learn the language. For instance, David Cameron in his 2011 speech on migration openly accused migrants unable to speak English of causing "discomfort and disjointedness" which has disrupted communities across England", and threatened to withdraw benefits from migrants unwilling to attend ESOL classes (Watt, 2011).

This apparent paradox of an insufficient and targeted provision coupled with a strong pressure for migrants to gain English knowledge mirrors the message that the government sends about migration: the only 'desirable' migrants are those who are willing and in the possession of the resources to 'integrate', who work (legally) and speak the language fluently. But there is no desire to extend desirability (and rights) to more migrants by enhancing their chances to learn English, rather their numbers must be controlled, limited, and if they can pay for the course themselves the better. In other words, this paradox is not a paradox. It willingly communicates to most migrants that unless they are documented, able and willing to 'integrate', to learn English (preferably by their own means) and to enter the labour market (also legally) they are simply not welcome. It is obvious that this approach to migration negatively affects the most disadvantaged of migrants, the least well off, and with the least means to become

'desirable'. Arguably, undocumented migrants are the most affected. I will go back to the accessibility to language classes for undocumented migrants in the second part of this chapter, where I will introduce the work of some alternative language classes, which address this issue specifically. For now, it suffices to remind of the importance of knowing how the dominant order in which these classes take place is one of restricted access for undocumented migrants and required language skills for integration.

Provision and accessibility of official language classes in Germany

The history of German classes in Germany, though different from the British one, also incurred major changes in the past decade (to be exact, in 2003 and 2005). Between 1974 and 2003, German classes for migrants were coordinated by the Sprachverband Deutsch e.V. (German language registered association), which received funding from the 'Ministry of Work and Social Order' and distributed it to over 500 different providers, ranging from adult education colleges, to migrant associations and Goethe institutes (Szablewski-Çavus, 2001). In her genealogy of language acquisition in Germany, Birgit zur Nieden reports how, until the introduction of Integrationskurse in 2003, German courses were available at a very discounted price for all EU migrants and migrant workers from Turkey and (former) Yugoslavia (the main non-EU countries from where 'Gastarbeiter' had been brought in since the 1950s) and their families. Moreover, the funding available for German classes were increasing every year (by the end the association had 28 million euros at their disposal), whilst the German association made sure that the cost for materials and for the courses stayed fixed and provided childcare for the children of the students (zur Nieden, 2009, p. 130). Some courses were totally free and, although teachers and teaching bodies were advised to check on the students' papers, this was often resisted and did not happen (zur Nieden, 2009, p. 130). As long as

the students had a plausible migration story that made them pass for EU citizens or from one 'Gastarbeitern' country, they could relatively easily get access to classes. This meant that many Latin Americans were passing as Spanish or Portuguese, many Kurdish asylum seekers as Turkish, and asylum seekers from war-ridden former Yugoslavia as descending from 'Gastarbeitern'. However, the restrictions were obviously still affecting many migrants, mostly black and Asian migrants, for whom passing would have been more difficult. In any way, talking numbers, by 2003 over a million migrant workers had completed a German course (Artisik, 2003).

In 2005, things changed drastically in the provision and coordination of German courses. Language acquisition started being officially used to measure migrants' will and ability to 'integrate', and it became obligatory in order to retain or acquire residence and work permits. In other words, testing and policing German knowledge acquisition became a main filter to migration itself. In Germany, (non-EU) new comers are since 2005 not just entitled to take part in a German course and to pass an end exam, they are required to. Although considerable funding is still available, the German language association was dismantled, and the provision and evaluation of German classes was moved to what used to be the government department for the assessment of asylum cases, part of the Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Ministry for Migration and Asylum, hereafter referred to as BAMF). Suddenly, a body that had previously exclusively dealt with the analysis of asylum cases (and mostly with refusals) found itself in charge of integration matters by coordinating, assigning and evaluating German schools and language courses. No specific training was provided to its employees and only one person from the former German language association found employment in the newly in charge department. The new German courses were called 'Integrationskurse', curricula and materials were changed and schools were compelled to comply with the newly set standards and to having officials with no language teaching expertise to assess their teaching standards. A few schools lost state acknowledgment through this process

(zur Nieden, 2009).

The new regulation means that entitlement to and enforcement of German courses is not depending anymore on migrants' countries of origin, but rather on their legal residence status. Migrants who have a legal residence permit for at least a year, EU migrants, and long time settled migrants are entitled to take the courses; whereas migrants with no knowledge of German, in receipt of Hartz IV (Job Seeker Allowance) or deemed 'particularly needy of integration' (Schüle, 2010) are obliged to take them. Migrants entitled to classes and migrants obliged to take them alike receive their referral to a German course by the BAMF, which needs to be shown to any acknowledged school together with a pass and a residence permit. Schools are required to check on the validity of the students' documents. Courses cost 2.40 euros per hour, of which the state in most cases pays half. Courses are only completely subsidised for people in receipt of benefits. Schools are also expected to keep record of students' attendance: literate migrants must attend 660 hours of class and then take a test, while illiterate ones have to attend 960 hours before being tested. The hours and price were increased in February 2012 from respectively 645 and 945 to 660 and 960 (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2012). If the test is failed, 300 extra hours are mandated (Schüle, 2010). If the participants do not attend class, the BAMF does not pay for the course, and in case the participants cannot afford their part of the costs, the schools have to apply for funding to the BAMF on their behalf (zur Nieden, 2009). German schools are thus not only in charge of providing language courses that manifestly seek the integration of migrants in the existing social order, but they also have to undertake policing and administrative roles, which have apparently nothing to do with language (zur Nieden, 2009). In such a policed and controlled environment, it is very likely that the vast majority of migrants to attend these German classes will be documented ones, or migrants well onto their path towards legalisation.

After the infamous racist statement of the social democratic party SPD-politician Thilo

Sarrazin, who in 2009 accused Turkish and Arabic migrants of not having any productive function in Germany, a strong debate took place about migrants' willingness to integrate (Schüle, 2010). Conservative CDU's Wolfgang Bobsbach declared that 40% of students were dropping out of Integrationskurse, fuelling a climate of hostility towards migrants and leading the left to enquire about official data from the government. The enquiry unveiled that in actual fact 77% of migrants who had been required to attend a German course actually did so, while the majority of the remaining 23% were not to be understood as deserting but had most likely been prevented by pregnancy, illness, moving to other areas or even by the lucky event of finding employment (Schüle, 2010). These numbers are obviously not to be taken as measurement of the successful 'integration' of migrants, but they rather show the discrepancies between anti-migrants, xenophobic discourses and actual data at the time. Apart from the similar and after 2005 increased exclusion of non-status migrants from access to language classes, the German scenario is also similar to the British one at the level of discourse: Germany only 'welcomes' migrants who are willing and able to 'integrate', and amongst those only those who already have found the means to legally be in this country. Also similarly to the UK, which is however not implementing ESOL classes' *attendance* as obligatory, in Germany there are indications of a demand for language classes that exceeds supply. A Die Zeit article of September 2012 noted how, although 96.000 migrants attended Integrationskurse in 2011, the courses do not reach all of the people who have migrated to Germany or intend to. Most EU migrants do not gain access to subsidised Integrationskurse (as they are also not required to attend them). People seeking asylum are also not eligible for subsidised courses until their status is formally legalised, whilst undocumented people "obviously do not get any state funded classes" (Janert, 2012, my translation).

It is interesting to note, through looking at the history and state of government funded language classes in Germany and in the UK, how the discourses behind the centrality of

language acquisition clash with their actual availability, but do not clash with agendas of migration control and management.

Provision and accessibility of language classes in Spain

If the German and British scenarios differ to a certain extent, the Spanish case is at a very different stage in respect to both in its language policies on migration. Spanish language classes and obligatory language tests for migrants to obtain specific rights have only recently been discussed, proposed and only locally applied. In the context of a European Union which aims at 'harmonising' policies on migration in all member states, Spain's 'delay' is most likely due to an intersection of factors, including the multilingual reality of the peninsula itself, the relatively recent history of immigration, and the high percentage of migrants from Spanish speaking countries, or with Latin-roots language knowledge (Villarreal, 2009).

Nevertheless, the introduction of language policies is getting closer, as was shown by Rajoy's Popular Party's November 2011 announcement to introduce a naturalisation culture and language test for migrants, and by its proposal of law in March 2013 (Gutierrez Calvo, 2013). Although this measure has not yet been passed or implemented, debates on its usefulness and on the usefulness of subsidised, centrally organised and coordinated language classes are growing. Already in 2009, the Ministry of Work and Migration commissioned a comparative report on language policies and integration in three different EU countries (Germany, UK and the Netherlands) in order to draw conclusions and recommendation for Spain to follow their example (Villarreal, 2009).

The introduction of official, nationally coordinated and possibly obligatory language classes is definitely very close, after in February 2012 the community of Madrid

introduced obligatory (short) integration courses and language tests for migrants wanting to get or renew their residence and work permits (Comunidad de Madrid, 2012). In Spain, the ability to speak the language is also linked to the ability of migrants to integrate – and Latino migrants are therefore seen as better integrated than other non-Europeans (Vigers & Mar-Molinero, 2009).

Discourses that link language knowledge with successful integration, although starting to take the ground, are however still less frequent in Spain than in Germany and the UK, and statistics and information on availability, demand and composition of currently existing classes are practically non-existent. It is however reported that NGOs, local governments and even universities offer 'thousands' of language classes for migrants (Arroyo Morgado, 2011). These classes have been criticised for the high numbers of dropouts and for their unqualified teachers with good intentions that verge into empty assistentialism, or for being individually coordinated, not officially recognised and not integrated in a common system (Arroyo Morgado, 2011). Arroyo Morgado complains that migrants, when asked about their experiences in language classes, usually say that they had a lovely time and met very nice people who helped them a lot, but did not speak of any particular curricular success (Arroyo Morgado, 2011).

To date I could not find any precise or recent data on the numbers of classes, official or not, available at national level. Through the economic crisis that affected Spain probably more than many other EU countries since 2010, the few subsidised classes of the Community of Madrid have also been cut (A., 2013), and there is evidence of classes risking to be completely struck down in other communities, because of the end of national subsidies (B.M., 2012). However, there is no official data even remotely dealing with issues of provision or availability. Within such a void of data, it is also very unclear how many migrants do have access to the available classes, let alone what status those who do and those who do not hold (or not). Within the Spanish context of a less statist approach to migrants' integration and assistance concomitant to the decreased

availability of state funding, the issue of language knowledge acquisition for migrants is nevertheless still connected to their successful integration in public discourse. The lack of data on availability or demand of courses, on the other hand, should be less of a reason for believing in the lacking need for the acquisition of language skills by migrants, than it actually points to the necessity to look at how language acquisition takes place outside of state management.

Alternative language classes and low attendance

The access of undocumented migrants to the existing classes in the three countries taken into consideration is very hard to measure. Whilst it is not to be excluded that some would manage to get into official courses (resistance to controls is possible), it is also obvious that it would be not an easy and widespread possibility. Moreover, other factors, on top of documents controls and requirement, are likely to affect the possibility for non-status migrant workers to access a language class. Exploitation at work, unconventional working hours, monetary difficulties that may restrict mobility are only some of the likely many factors that may make it hard to attend a language class. Dermot Bryers of English for Action conveyed to me in an interview²⁶ that their classes do not uphold immigration status as a criteria. On the contrary, they do not usually have any eligibility criteria at all (Bryers, 2013). English for Action can be seen as a semi-official project: they are accredited with the Open College Network and their students can receive nationally recognised ESOL certificates. About half of their courses are accredited and students are given the opportunity to form work groups amongst themselves to prepare for the citizenship test, though the school does not prepare them for it. They receive mostly private funding – only 5% of their funding is public. As seen

²⁶ Bryers gave me consent to quote this information, as he did not feel it would be problematic for English for Action to make public that the project works with undocumented migrants (Bryers, 2013).

in Chapter 2, their courses have an outspokenly political focus on community organising, and crucially, they do welcome undocumented migrants. Bryer's estimated guess (the status not being a criteria means it obviously does not get recorded) as to how many non-status migrants attend their classes is one in five. The classes of English for Action are attended to date²⁷ by 250 students, and comprise 16 different classes around London (Bryers, 2013). When asked about attendance, Bryers noted how the beginning two years of the project (which was launched in 2006) were characterised by a problem of low attendance, and they even had to drop all classes held in work places (mainly factories and hotels), because due to split shifts, long distances between work and home, and long working hours "it was impossible to retain students, they just wanted to leave" (Bryers, 2013). The classes managed to gain much better attendance by moving close to the communities where students lived, and taking place in already attended spaces like community centres, schools, mosques and churches. Also, Bryers noted how early morning classes, taking place after students had dropped children at school, were best attended. Although English for Action is importantly accessed by non-status migrants, the estimated numbers are relatively low²⁸. This could be due to the fact that these classes are not advertised as classes that allow for undocumented migrants to attend (I was myself in touch with this project since 2010 and only found out in 2013 about this), although the trusts and foundations that fund them, and even one local Council, are knowledgeable of their 'openness' (Bryers, 2013). This lack of advertisement despite the knowledge of funders might not only have to do with security, but also with the stigma attached to illegalised migration. Undocumented migrants' rights are thematised in class, and teachers have focussed on explaining how to "know your rights" in case of being stopped by the police for immigration controls. However, Bryers reported about

²⁷ i.e. October 2013.

²⁸ Whilst the attendance is not generally low, the ratio 1:5 might seem to be, given that non-status migrants do not have as easy access to other classes as documented migrants do. Bryers himself speaks of 500,000 estimated undocumented migrants (Bryers, 2013). However, it is important to highlight that we are dealing with assumed numbers and that these, as well as their absence, are often manipulated to make xenophobic warnings against floods of migrants (e.g. Arkell, 2013).

the fact that undocumented migrants do not generally come out as such in front of other students, but rather, if at all, only to the teachers, and ask for discretion with the rest of the class. While he did not detect tensions between documented and undocumented migrants in class, he still did sense an unease and fear of judgement by those who came out to him, and possible unease of some other teachers about opening up the topic in class (Bryers, 2013). This fear may be indicative that, even within such 'open' classes, it may be more difficult or uncomfortable for undocumented migrants to attend²⁹. Moreover, whilst Bryers insisted that the settings of the classes by no means led to a less politicised environment, one cannot exclude that such spaces, together with the family oriented times of class could collide with the working hours and the daily lives of many migrants working in the informal sectors, such as sex workers. Finally, Bryers himself remarks how, “for the estimated 500,000 undocumented migrants there is little hope of getting a good ESOL course” (Bryers, 2013).

I am far from wanting to criticise the important work of English for Action. This section is though an attempt to thematise undocumented migration, language learning and the accessibility to available ways to gain language knowledge. This means looking at the difficulties and limits of transformative projects as much as of official ones.

More or less official classes are also obviously not the only way to acquire language knowledge. Within rather constraining conditions, one can assume that family and social networks may play a key role in allowing migrants to develop language skills. However, not all migrants have the opportunity of benefiting from established and helpful networks. Undocumented migrants and migrant workers in the informal market such as sex workers are likely to have limited access to such networks as well as to official classes, because of the stigma attached to their jobs, of their being often isolated in them, and lacking time or other resources. These groups of migrants, when lacking

²⁹ The issue of language and agency is addressed in the next chapter.

national language knowledge, are more likely to be exploited in irregular work situations and to fail to learn important information about their rights (Anderson, 2010; Mai, 2010; x:talk, 2010a). In an effort to respond to the lack of accessible language classes, in some EU countries including the UK, Spain and Germany migrants and activists have started setting up free language classes for undocumented migrants, domestic and sex workers, and street sellers. For example, in 2006 in London, UK, a group of migrant and non-migrant sex-workers and activists including myself started organising the x:talk project, which provides free English classes for migrant workers in the sex industry (x:talk, 2013). The classes take place in safe and confidential spaces and are taught by (predominantly migrant) sex workers with English teaching experience. Across Spain, different groups linked through the migrant rights' network *Oficina de Derechos Sociales* have been organising free language classes for street sellers and for migrants in general in over five cities on and off, also since 2006. In Germany, similarly but within quite more binding and constricting conditions than in the UK for English for Action, the politically engaged, though officially accredited school *Worldword* welcomes undocumented migrants and migrants who cannot afford to enrol by offering them free places in its *Integrationskurse*.

During my fieldwork for this research, as well as during my own political activism within x:talk, I enquired into and reflected on further issues of attendance and accessibility to alternative classes, as in order to be able to analyse the work of these projects, it is crucial to look into their composition and into the factors that determine it. For this reason, I will now introduce a brief analysis of the factors that may hinder the attendance of students in these three projects as well, whilst introducing them. First of all, I intend to look at the specific case of migrant sex workers and at the problems they may face to attend language classes for which they do not need documents to enrol, classes that are free and organised by other sex workers. Then I will go to look at the composition and attendance for some of the classes organised within the ODS, more

specifically the ASP of Madrid, and, finally, at the case of Worldword.

The case of x:talk

The x:talk project is based on the importance of language skills in order to work in the sex industry in safer and better conditions, to communicate and negotiate with bosses and clients and to socialise and organise with other workers (x:talk, 2013). Starting out from a wish to share language skills with other workers, in May 2007 x:talk delivered its first 12 week English language pilot course, thanks to a small grant from the Feminist Review Trust (Feminist Review Trust, 2011). This first free course was held in a sexual health centre in Paddington, central London, and had a small but steady number of students attending each class (between four and eight). The promotion for the course was carried out by the project health advisers during their normal outreach hours, whilst visiting sex work premises, in the space of two weeks prior to the classes. These were advertised as specifically for and by workers in the sex industry, and as taking place in a safe and confidential space.

After the first small success we managed to get more funding (through fund-raisers and private donations) and to expand the classes, in order to reach out to more workers and not only to sexual health service users, and in order to offer specific classes for different language levels. In February 2008, three different courses were advertised and launched in two London sexual health projects, one in Paddington and one in Soho. Starting one month prior to the classes, ads were put in local newspapers, translated into 12 languages, leaflets were delivered to all London sexual health projects and door to door outreach was undertaken in the working flats in Soho. The x:talk contact telephone, which students are prompted to call in order to book their place and get the time for and directions to the classes, received over forty phone-calls by interested sex workers. The

classes, however, were attended by a maximum of three students at the time, they had many no-shows and had to be interrupted two weeks before schedule.

After a year spent fundraising, organising against criminalisation and networking with other ally-organisations, in 2010 x:talk started another course in an independent space in central London, donated by an art gallery. The new course, thanks to increased funding, carried on for a whole year. The classes were widely advertised through door to door outreach in sex work premises all around London, through sitting in the drop-in hours of sexual health projects, and through directly contacting websites' users offering sexual services. This time, starting with low attendance on the first (rainy) day, the classes reached a peak of ten students and oscillated between two and ten each class. When x:talk's premises moved in 2011, we decided not to offer the classes in our new space, but to put our efforts into teaching in workplaces or close by. Since February 2012, x:talk is running two classes: one not highly attended one in a Soho pub (between 3 and 4 students) and a way more successful class in a massage parlour in North London, where classes are followed on average by nine women (however during their work hours) five times a month. While I am writing this, i.e. September 2013, x:talk is in the process of organising a new class for dancers in a London strip club.

At this point, two main questions arise: why is it so difficult to have a steady number of students attending? And why was the first time x:talk organised a class more successful than the second, even if the outreach for the latter was far more wide-reaching? And more generally – what are the conditions of domination and reproduction of the social order in which the x:talk classes operate, and how may they affect attendance and accessibility? What follows is an attempt to point out the various factors that stand in the way of getting big and stable numbers of sex workers together in order to learn a needed language.

As many scholars and activists have pointed out, in Europe as well as elsewhere, the increased criminalisation of the sex industry and the implementation of anti-trafficking measures are likely to reinforce the stigma attached to the profession and the isolation and economic instability of sex workers, especially migrants (Agustín, 2007; Bindman & Doezema, 1997; Davies, 2009; Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998). In general terms, the criminalisation of the sex industry strengthens the perception that selling sex is a wrong and immoral act. In turn, the discourse around trafficking portrays migrant sex workers as victims of an inherently exploitative industry, denying them of any agency within their migratory and working lives, while anti-trafficking measures increase the risk of deportation for undocumented migrants (Agustín, 2007; Anderson & Andrijasevic, 2008; Andrijasevic, 2010; Davies, 2009; Mai, 2011; x:talk, 2010a).

In order to understand why the classes were at times very under-attended, the x:talk collective members have held numerous meetings, and one of the many conclusions that were drawn from our analyses and experience was that further criminalisation and the frequent raids on premises in the UK (respectively a result of The Policing and Crime Bill of December 2007 (Secretary Jaqui Smith, 2008); the Policing and Crime Act of 2009 (The Guardian, 2009) and of the anti-trafficking operation Pentameter 2 (BBC News, 2007a) had increased migrant sex workers' instability and fear of exposure, and thus their willingness to come to class. In 2010, x:talk got funded by Aim for Human Rights (Aim for Human Rights, 2013) to undertake a Human Rights impact assessment of anti-trafficking policies in the UK, according to which the raids of premises in the name of rescuing trafficked victims "have created a climate where some migrant sex workers are too afraid to access basic health and other services" (x:talk, 2010a, p. 27). Moreover, the report argues that anti-trafficking policies and operations in the UK are underpinned by an abolitionist position which aims at eradicating all prostitution, and

only offers help for exploited sex workers contingent upon them exiting sex work (x:talk, 2010a).

In such context, a course advertised as organised for and by migrant sex workers could be seen as suspicious for a number of reasons: getting together in one space could be seen as unsafe in the event of immigration controls (or anti-trafficking 'rescue' operations), or it could be feared as a masquerade for yet another project which aims at getting workers to exit prostitution. In short, general suspicion about the genuine character of the project is to be expected.

However, after participating in one class, students would immediately realise that the majority of the people involved in the organisation, teachers included, are or have been sex workers themselves, they do not ask students for personal information (such as real name or address) and maintain the space as safe as possible (e.g. not advertising the address on any flyer or website).

Stigma

Another factor at play is related to the stigma attached to the profession (Pheterson, 1993, 1996). I understand social stigma as the combination of discrediting and classifying attributes given by the larger society to specific groups, which are deemed deplorable, inferior and/or are victimised on the base e.g. of their backgrounds, professions or sexual and gender identities. Migrants, especially economic and illegalised ones, are mostly stigmatised because of racist, classist and anti-migrants, xenophobic prejudices. Sex workers are affected by the stigma against what is seen as their 'immoral', 'unhealthy' activity – which is largely not recognised as work. This stigma may intersect in turn with racism, xenophobia, anti-immigrants rhetoric, victimisation, sexism and homo and transphobia. Migrant sex workers are therefore

often multiply and complexly stigmatised.

The stigma existing upon sex workers might play a central role in the problematic of low attendance to x:talk's classes. Even knowing that the classes are safe spaces, where sex work is acknowledged as labour and where there is respect for one's different lifestyles, students might still not be happy to come together *as* sex workers, they might want to relegate that part of their lives to their working hours and not have to think about it while learning English or while coming into contact with other people. In other words, potential students of x:talk might not identify or might not want to be identified by others as sex workers in this setting (or any other setting apart from at work). Given that the x:talk classes are by and for sex workers and the language taught is related to work situations, a strong detachment from sex work in the negotiation of one's identity can be another reason why some students would decide not to attend at all or not to go back after attending one class.

Precarity

Apart from strengthening sex workers' and migrant sex workers' stigma, the raids and the closures of premises are also likely to affect the stability of their income, and increase the precarity of their work. Flat workers, for instance, are compelled to constantly look for different flats to work in, out of fear that these would be raided, and they often travel to other cities across the UK to work for short periods of time (Mai, 2010; x:talk, 2010a). This precarity has been concomitant with the economic crisis that made the prices for sexual services sink since early 2008. Many of the migrant sex workers interviewed for the 2009 study 'Migrants in the UK Sex Industry' (Mai, 2010), complained about the continuous closures of premises and reported the impact of the crisis on their work. Similarly, in the 2010 Human Rights impact assessment x:talk

reports that “closure orders meant constant displacement from work places”, and led to interruption of work and loss of earnings (x:talk, 2010a, p. 25). Such instability makes it even harder to commit to going to class if a possible job gets in the way. Between learning English for free and earning some money in a moment of scarcity of work, the latter will be most likely chosen over the former. Indeed, having had a last minute job has been one of the most recurrent reasons given by students for failing to attend, together with having had a late night at work and not been able to get up in the morning. In 2007, students might have found it easier to work on an alternative day or time and commit to going to class than they did one or two years later, where the availability of work and the amount of pay had both diminished.

Isolation and de-socialisation

Spaces like x:talk, where sex workers from different countries gather as such and are expected to communicate with each other are extremely rare in the UK, and if one excludes very few work situations, practically inexistent. It cannot be thus excluded that some might find such a space awkward or suspicious for its very uniqueness. While informal networks of sex workers may exist, economic strains and precarity make the sex industry a highly competitive milieu. Competition divides and isolates, undermining the very possibility of alliances and bonding of sex workers with each other (O'Connell Davidson, 1998; x:talk, 2010a). On the other hand, social stigma is one main reason why sex workers are less likely to encounter spaces where they can socialise without having to hide their occupation. Moreover, especially in the case of the UK, isolation is connected to the configuration of the workplace itself. Turning the attention to the governmentality of the sex industry, in the UK it is illegal to profit from other people's sex work. As a result of this principle, instead of cooperatives of sex workers who share

the rent and the profit, what one gets is the prohibition to have more than one worker and one maid (the industry term for 'receptionist') working in one place at the same time (following the logic that if more than one worker works in the same flat at the same time, the owner will be obviously profiting from their cumulative work) (The Crown Prosecution Service, 2013). The result is that usually flats have a maximum of two or three sex workers at one time, divided on different floors, while most others only one, often – but not always – accompanied by a maid (x:talk, 2010a, p. 20). Such work settings, combined with the instability of the workplace which I discussed above, make it harder for sex workers to socialise and bond with each other. Isolation and de-socialisation can be seen as corollaries of the governmentality of sex work in the UK, and attempts like x:talk to bring together sex workers for the purpose of knowledge sharing face the difficult task of finding alternative ways to break through them.

Economic and Conjunctural factors

Finally, there are other conjunctural factors that should be taken into account when reflecting on low and inconsistent attendance. These factors are to be understood in economic terms. Migrant sex workers are in vast majority in this business in order to make money, which they mostly need to maintain their families, to pay off debts to people who facilitated their entrance in the country, and/or to save up in the prospect of going back home (Mai, 2010). In such circumstances, especially if they see their permanence in the UK as temporary, the main interest remains earning money, and an English class might not seem relevant if one is already managing to bring home an income. In this case, not only might a class take away earning hours, it might also take away resting hours, which would allow for more work the next day. In such situation, a consistent distance of the class in relation to one's home or workplace, and even factors

such as bad weather conditions, might all be working as incentives to stay in and rest.

All of the above factors affecting migrant sex workers, together with the overall hostile climate against undocumented migrants, are to be taken into account in order to highlight the importance of a project that aims at countering isolation, stigma and criminalisation. At the same time, this analysis sets x:talk's initiatives within the current dominant order, and it shows their fragility and the incredible amount of work needed for them to take place and to reach limited groups of people, who are made hard to reach under the constraints just exposed. Such fragility is not only a characteristic of x:talk as a project by and for sex workers, it is rather common to all of the projects analysed in this thesis, inasmuch as they attempt to break isolation and be accessible by undocumented migrants.

The Spanish Network of Oficina de Derechos Sociales

Another very interesting network of projects providing free Spanish classes to undocumented street sellers and other migrants in Madrid, Terrasa, Malaga, Seville and Zaragoza is the Spanish Oficina de Derechos Sociales (ODS). The ODS started in 2006 and it comprises of different associations and social centres, whose work ranges from legal advice, to free language classes, to self-organisation of undocumented migrants, all at a grassroots, unsubsidised level. In the summer of 2011, as part of my fieldwork I met and sat in on some classes of a few of these organisations: the 'Asociación de Sin Papeles' of Madrid and a few social centres, that is, 'Seco' in Madrid, 'La casa invisible' in Malaga, and the 'Ateneu Candela' in Terrassa (Barcelona) (Ateneu Candela, 2013; Oficina de Derechos Sociales de Seco, 2013; Oficina de Derechos Sociales de Sevilla, 2013).

The Asociación de Sin Papeles and Seco are also part of a Madrid-wide further migrant rights network called 'Ferrocarril Clandestino' (Ferrocarril Clandestino, 2013). This network meets fortnightly and it includes a big number of associations/ social centres providing Spanish classes. The Asociación de Sin Papeles is a grassroots organisation of migrant rights activists including undocumented migrants from the Sub-Saharan region and allies, which struggles against racism and discrimination. ASP provides a space for intercultural get-together, to share experiences, and organise against legal systems that normalise one's existence, against the racist raids which chase and menace people with and without papers, against the existence of detention centres for migrants, and against migrants' general criminalisation and stigmatisation. The association started as a small group of people providing legal aid and it grew to have different working groups: legal, theatre, self-education, sports, dance, and Spanish classes. The association campaigned and protested against the criminalisation of street sellers and managed, in 2010, to have the crime for street selling downgraded from penal to civil, which diminished by far the chances of a sentence to prison (Ferrocarril Clandestino, 2010; Galafate, 2010). Between 2008 and 2013 they provided Spanish classes to migrants, specifically sub-Saharan street sellers. I sat in on a couple of their classes and spoke to both teachers and students. At the time of my fieldwork (between 2011 and 2013), all of the students were also active in struggles for their rights alongside other activists, including the teachers (Asociación de Sin Papeles, 2008; M., 2011)

Seco is a social centre in the quarter of Vallecas, Madrid. It is ceded by the local government and hosts a variety of social and political event. At Seco, there are two different sets of Spanish classes for migrants, a mixed one twice a week and a women-only one, once a week. Seco created working cooperatives for undocumented migrants, i.e. lists of people who do a variety of jobs: hairdressing, carpentry, painting, cooking,

building etc. The contacts are passed on to interested people and the services advertised through informal networks. 5% of the money earned through these working coops goes into a common fund for any emergencies. In 2011, I could attend the women's classes, which took place weekly and are attended by an average of 6 students (T. & L., 2011).

The Ateneu Candela is a social centre in an old industrial complex in a small, industrial town at the outskirts of Barcelona. The Ateneu organises political events on a range of issues and are mostly active on issues of migration. They have a big space where they organise Spanish and Catalan classes, meetings of their *Asociación de Sin Papeles* Terrassa, theatre and ballroom events, they also have a bar with two internet points. Beyond offering free language classes to all non-EU migrants, they are able to provide a certificate of attendance in form of a card to migrants without papers, which has been used in the past as a proof of 'integration' in case of raids. However, they give this card to any migrant who asks for it, and it has therefore lost value in front of the local government. Now they give an additional 'Ateneu' card to the migrants who are more involved and do take part in the classes. At the time of my fieldwork (June 2011) their classes were averagely attended by ten people (D., 2011).

La casa invisible is a social centre in a historical building in the centre of Malaga, which in 2011 won a battle against its eviction because of the weight of its cultural and social events. La casa invisible has decided to start the language classes in 2007, in an attempt to avoid assistentialism and to have a space of knowledge exchange. As of May 2011, it ran two days a week, with a small (between two and eight), unsteady number of students, from different countries (F., 2011).

Although all of these projects tell stories of great political and social exchanges and

work together with the migrants who came to class³⁰, nearly all of the teachers I spoke to also complained that one big problem was low and non-constant attendance. When asked why they thought attendance was a problem, the reasons they came up with resembled the ones I considered above in relation to x:talk: lack of motivation relating to pressing needs to make money rather than investing in learning, conjunctural factors such as weather conditions, and more structural factors, such as work schedules and times, or the need to rest or to engage with one's legal, or rather illegalised situation.

In particular in the case of ASP Madrid, the teachers I interviewed always complained that the classes were attended by less people than they expected to, even within already existing members of the association. Also, they complained about the gender composition of the classes: only male students were attending. One teacher/activist, C., identified the problem in the gendered division of the political and personal realm, and said that the women of the Sub-Saharan community were only showing up at social events as the companions, friends or relatives of male members of the association. C. said that in these occasions the women were always approached and asked to come along to events and classes, but that never happened (C., 2011). Another teacher, A., pointed to the fact that she saw the entire association as problematic in its reflection of gender and race dynamics: she saw the whole structure of the project as one of white Spanish women (she called them the 'mamis') working together with black men, reproducing old dynamics that see white women as 'helpers' of the black men, in a relation where sexual dynamic also played a role. In this sense she saw that the lack of women was due to the intersection of issues of gender and race and that only a women only class could have possibly allowed women to attend (A., 2013).

The issue of low attendance and gender composition is strongly present in the work of the projects mentioned above. Similarly to x:talk, these organisations work with criminalised, hard to reach groups and are affected by the constrictions of a social order

³⁰ Chapter 6 analyses the importance of their politics for transformation through language from the margins.

made of identity controls, social, race and gender divides. The resulting fragility of these projects is shown in their difficulty to reach big numbers and overcome the internal reproduction of divides. However, their persistence, and the political mobilisations that engender from ASP and other projects despite such constraints indicate the importance of looking into and analysing the significance of their work with and through language classes.

Worldword

Worldword is a German language school that was first set up in 1981 in a squatted complex by a group of migrants and German activists, with the idea of organising events on international topics and exchanging language knowledge amongst activists in the radical left scene and beyond. Worldword turned into an official school run collectively and paying rent for the rooms it uses after the complex was bought by the people living in it in the 90's. Currently, Worldword teaches around 12 languages, including official German Integrationskurse, and it runs citizenship and residence language tests, while it organises political and social events on themes including migrants' rights, anti-racism and anti-capitalism. The number of students attending the German classes is approximately 130 in one term. About half are enrolled in Integrationskurse (G., 2013).

Because of its history, the school is generally attended by a high number of political activists in the local and international radical left scene, and it is therefore a site where information on political events is exchanged. The German teachers and students I spoke to were also all aware of the political character of language, and all teachers said they try to use materials and contents of political and social relevance to the students, whilst

pointing the pitfalls and avoiding where possible the use of the material imposed by the government (G., 2011, 2013; Mg., 2011; S., 2011).

Importantly, Worldword provides two free places in each class to give to asylum seekers, undocumented and precarious migrants. One of the teachers I interviewed, G., stated how of these two places one is nearly always left unattended at some stage of the course. G. noted that in her ten years experience as a teacher, she would single out difficulty and costs of travel (especially in the case of asylum seekers whose residences are normally outside of cities), or generally difficulties related to the precarity of their living and working conditions. In the case of women, G. also pointed at child care as a problem that led to irregular attendance (G., 2011). Of relevance may also be that Worldword does not publicise its offer beyond word of mouth amongst people connected to the scene. Moreover, despite the overt political setting of the school and their positioning against borders, the reality of controls that incurs in all German schools may definitely work as a further deterrent from even attempting to join a class, even if the teachers at Worldword refuse to take documents and protect the data of the students who do not wish to be enlisted. In G.'s experience, similarly to what Bryers was reporting about English for Action, undocumented migrants do not tend to be open about their status, or thematise it at all in class. Within the seemingly official context of an Integrationskurs (which is after all what is -also- taking place in Worldword) it is not surprising that fear of detention and deportation would result in silence about one's (lack of) status. G. could actually not remember one single case in which a disclosure in class would have happened, although she said that migration law, resources for working without papers or strategies for accessing healthcare are constant topics in class. However, this silence 'only' applies to migrants who are undocumented and see themselves as 'economic migrants', and therefore not seeking asylum. Asylum seekers are instead usually very open about their political and personal status, probably not surprisingly as G. says, given the tendency in society of demonising so called

undocumented 'economic migrants' and 'non-genuine' asylum seekers³¹ (G., 2011).

On a different note, in the case of those migrants on the path to legalisation who are forced to take the course, G. noted how in some cases they do not really wish to come, they would rather work or do other things, and they choose Worldword precisely because it allows them, by faking the attendance list whenever possible (i.e. when no inspection comes), to prove attendance and not lose their residence permit (G., 2011). This last point is a very interesting indicator of how enforcements to attend a class are not meant to support migrants but to rather control them, especially in precarious situations where learning the language cannot have priority over, for example, earning a living.

The case of Worldword is yet another example of how controls, economic and legal constraints, together with stigma contribute to make it harder to reach out to undocumented migrants. However, this case has a specific significance in terms of its resistance within the terms set by the state: it is a project that is accredited and acknowledged as an official language school, and through its practice of allowing undocumented migrants in and refusing to act as internal border control it suggests how social order and domination are not pervasive and overpowering.

Fragility and Importance of Alternative Language Classes

The provision and accessibility of language classes within the existing order of migration restrictions, controls and management sketched in this chapter showed a lack of engagement with the question of language acquisition for undocumented migrants at governmental level, and the difficulties faced by projects that do engage with it. After

³¹ There have been many debates within the field of Refugee Studies and within activist circles, about descriptive terminology about migration. The term 'economic migrant' tends to be opposed to the one of ('genuine') forced migrant, as if economic strains and the difficulty, or impossibility of living a sustainable life were not strongly influencing 'the choice' to migrate (Robinson, 2002; Neumayer, 2005).

sketching the situation of availability of language classes in the UK, Germany and Spain, I have looked at a series of different reasons why undocumented migrants and migrant sex workers who might benefit from the English for Action and x:talk free English classes in London, may end up not attending them. Also, I have shown that for other projects in Spain and Germany attendance problems also arise and the activists involved at times analysed these problems along similar lines. In general, all possible factors that may hamper migrants' access to language classes should be taken into consideration when stressing the importance of learning the national language in order to be able to work and live in better conditions and to assert one's rights. All of the factors analysed here are to indicate the difficulty and dependence of the work of these projects from the existing economic, political and social conditions which affect the lives of the migrants that are to attend the classes, including the alternative ones. In particular, across all projects, it has emerged how for non-status migrants issues of economic precarity, social stigma and what De Genova calls their constant 'deportability', which may affect all aspects of everyday life, are influencing strongly their ability or willingness to attend a class (De Genova, 2002). The consideration of these circumstances and structures indicates how it is very hard, and probably impossible, to find the perfect formula for a truly accessible class. Furthermore, it also points at the fragility, the small scale and the big amount of work required to carry out such projects.

At this point, what these data and reflections lead to, is a dualistic crossroad with seemingly only two exits. On the one hand, in the very context of official language classes that seek to exclude undocumented migrants and maintain the social order in which these are at the lowest bottom, alternative projects gain not only the fragility of their existence, but also their importance, through their existence *despite* such constrictive social order. They show by their mere existence that efforts to control and exclude are never completely successful. On the other hand, thinking structurally in

terms of reproduction of hierarchies and domination, one may read the problems likely encountered by non-status migrants as symptoms of the impossibility, or at best unlikelihood of transforming social order from marginalised positions. This could in turn imply the very impossibility for marginalised subjects to develop an own voice, language, and initiate transformation through it.

To conclude, from this account of provision of and accessibility to language classes the aforementioned questions around the possibility of agency and transformation through language from the margins newly arise, and the need for an inquiry into the latter becomes the more pressing. This will indeed be the theme of the following chapter.

Chapter 4 | Juggling with the Power of Language

Language³², its power, its potential and its limits for social and political change, are the driving force of this thesis, as much as they are key for each of the three projects that form the main empirical examples for its development. As just seen in the previous chapter, x:talk, Asociación de Sin Papeles and Worldword are different and unique projects that share a commitment to transformation and resistance to the dominant, racist social order, and see language and communication as central to this.

One of the things that unites the above groups is their emphasis on teaching and using the national language differently, with a consciousness of the political nature of language in general and of official language in particular, and the belief in the possibility of change and transformation through it from marginal positions.

Whether it is possible to scrutinise or even to back up this belief with theoretical tools that will in turn allow analysing its effects and implications is the question which this chapter seeks to answer. In doing so, I will not only try to read the practices of these projects through the lenses of influential theories on language, agency and political change, but I will interrogate the viability and usefulness of these very theories in light of the political and collective work of x:talk, ASP and Worldword. In other words, I will attempt to make theory and practice work together, in dialogue and exchange, in an attempt not to reproduce the dualism between them.

³² This chapter will mainly deal with language in its metaphorical meaning, that is, language as communication, interaction, expression and politics. More specifically it will enquire in the possibility of agency within it.

First of all, in order to give theoretical weight and depth to language as a politically charged instrument of domination, I will revisit Bourdieu's theories, which will be helpful to show and unveil how, through its taken-for-granted neutral character, official language serves and reproduces dominant power relations, backing up the critical attempt to understand national language and the practice of its teaching. For the sake of analysing the possibility of disruption and transformation, the focus will be directed onto agency within language, where Bourdieu's framework brings in heterodoxa, i.e. alternative language, which will however fall short of accounting for nuances and marginality, rather resting on the necessity of authorisation and on an arguable dualism between dominant and counter-dominant language (Bourdieu, 1991).

Following the realisation of the ambivalences present in the language taught by the above mentioned projects and as a response to the perceived difficulty of theorising agency with Bourdieu, the chapter then turns to Judith Butler's theories on language and performative power. Butler shifts the focus onto the omnipresent, yet unstable and unpredictable power of language, onto its historicity and temporality, and provides a compelling framework to think of agency within reiteration and resignification, i.e. within the possible failure of language to reproduce itself and the dominant order and the possibility of transformation through the unsteadiness and unpredictability of language and power (Butler, 1997).

Because of the impurity inherent to the understanding of language in Butler, and because of the centrality of resignification, her theories prove very relevant to an understanding of the practices of these projects, in particular of x:talk, which engages in the political attempt to resignify hurtful and stigmatised language in order to change views on sex work, both at the micro-level of the classes and at the macro-level of its campaigns.

However, neither Bourdieu or Butler, alone or together, seem to provide the tools for

analysing the possibility of collective agency and transformation from the margins, Bourdieu being too attached to the need for tracing resistance within the current social field, and Butler limited by an understanding of resistance as possible only within the terms set by language, and only through acts of resignification. This proves problematic if one needs to account for the work of projects that use practices of resistance through language in a collective, diverse way, projects which cannot be understood as either purely resisting or purely complying with the dominant order, and whose scale is quite small and marginal.

A possible way forward will be located in making use of a broader understanding of language as multiple, which would avoid reducing it to binaries such as alternative or official, nor seeing it exclusively as an overarching, pervasive structure holding a dominant, constitutive force which can only be subverted from within. I will show how within x:talk, Worldword and Asociación de Sin Papeles, language is used in multiple ways which, in their interaction, make the specificity of the projects' political work. Multilingualism and agency in interaction and dialogue will form the integrative framework, drawn from the philosophy of language of Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtine & Volochinov, 1977), which, together with Bourdieu and Butler, is meant to provide useful instruments for making sense of the collective politicality from the margins of the three projects this thesis relies on.

Language, power and domination—the Bourdiean framework

The filtering power of official language

x:talk is based on the idea that language knowledge is beneficial because it allows subjects who can make use of it to communicate, to negotiate, to organise and ultimately to improve their lives (x:talk, 2013). As previously argued, language is

indeed a complex field through which dominant power relations are reproduced and whose symbolic structure reflects the structure of social differences. As Bourdieu pointed out, language is not a neutral, autonomous field that develops independently from political and economical processes. What he calls 'legitimate' or 'official' language (i.e. grammatically correct, and formally recognised) is both a product of national and market unification and, because of the unequal distribution and transmission of linguistic capital, an instrument to maintain and reproduce existing social divisions (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 54). The formal education system, which teaches the dominant usages of languages, reproduces the symbolic domination that differentiates those who have access and better chances to retain and develop linguistic capital, from those who, belonging to dominated classes, do not (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 60).

As I argued in the first chapter, when it comes to migration, in receiving countries like the UK, Germany and Spain discourses of integration and respect for the country's culture pressurise migrants to learn the national language, while language knowledge can be seen as a way of filtering desirable from undesirable migrants, as well as migrants from citizens. National language knowledge can be advantageous to pass immigration controls, and it indubitably provides better chances to pass naturalisation tests and to get access to higher status jobs, scholarships, and thus visas. In Chapter 3, I reviewed the way in which in the UK official language classes are increasingly inaccessible for many migrants, undocumented and not, in Germany they are largely only available for documented migrants (or on their way to legalisation), and while little data is available on the situation in Spain, there is evidence of lack of provision and funding cuts to existing language classes. While it seems obvious that all migrants (as well as all non-migrant citizens) would benefit from mastering the (legitimate) national language, Bourdieu reminds how the very transmission of such official, authorised language entails and reproduces the distinction between what is speakable and what is

not, between the vulgar and the distinguished, which in turn reflects and reproduces existing divisions in society (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 60). As discussed in Chapter 2, teaching the dominant language can reproduce hierarchical relations between teachers and students and between the language taught and the first language of the students (De Genova, 2005). Bourdieu further explains how symbolic domination subtly leads dominated groups to recognise the legitimacy of the official language (even if they cannot speak it) through the concept of *habitus*, which is what is neither passively accepted nor willingly adopted, but stands for the pre-conscious bodily incorporation of social relations. Through legitimate language and *habitus* (as those unconsciously learnt, incorporated practices that lead to understanding what is given as natural while regenerating this naturality through their very exercise) the classificatory system of the established social order is imposed as objective and the dominant *doxa* that originates serves to naturalise and justify this order while concealing the arbitrariness of its foundations (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 127).

Following Bourdieu, one can interpret the language of integration imposed by the state in its naturalisation tests as one further tool for the maintenance of social order. As analysed in Chapter 2, the language required to pass such tests, as well as the language taught in formal language courses, is indeed a specific language that reproduces existing divisions. Access to and chances of success in acquiring such language will depend on the migrants' social, economical and legal positions and on the structuration of social relations. Inevitably, those with the economic and cultural resources needed to learn the language and those on the path to legalisation will find it much easier to access classes, while those who have had access to formal education in their home countries will have better tools to succeed in the learning process, as they will have been pre-exposed and pre-disposed to the official kind of language taught. Furthermore, official language also defines by negation what is speakable and what is unbecoming, again reproducing differences between desirable and undesirable migrants. For example, the language

taught by official courses would not ever include most terms or modes of speaking that are used in the sex industry, arguably indirectly reproducing the stigma attached to it.

In this respect, for groups like x:talk and Asociación de Sin Papeles, who aim to organise respectively migrant sex and street workers (i.e. undesirable migrants) teaching the official language would become an insidious juggle between the wish to gain and share the immediate power that its knowledge endows and the risk of reproducing the established social order that criminalises their work and their personas and jeopardises the chances of mobilisation.

The possibility of an alternative language

So far I have looked at official language and argued that it reflects and reproduces social divisions while it contributes to maintaining the established social order. However, it would be difficult to understand the projects that I look at in this thesis as attempts to teaching the official language of integration. With their critical and challenging approach to migration restrictions and accessibility to language classes, and with their radical, critical praxis and pedagogies, these projects not only obviously teach the language differently, but they may be seen as teaching a different language altogether. x:talk, for example, teaches the very language needed by sex workers in their work situations, including negotiating and dealing with bosses and clients, describing oneself and the services one offers or not, how to find a new job, small talk with colleagues, safer sex with clients, and so forth. Moreover, the x:talk classes aim at providing a space where sex work can be openly talked about and not relegated to the unspeakable (x:talk, 2013). Similarly, through an engagement with carefully chosen materials, including news and events of political and social relevance to different status migrants³³ always

³³ Examples include the introduction of new legislation on migration, or the occurrence of immigration raids, or of protests and campaigns for the rights of migrants.

openly set in political terms, La Asociación de Sin Papeles and Worldword teach a language that seeks to communicate anti-racism and the belief in the righteousness of freedom of movement for all (C., 2011; S., 2011). Also, linking back to Chapter 2, projects ascribing to radical pedagogies like English for Action in the UK, strongly insist on the fact that the language taught is generated and resulting from the experiences and contribution of the students, and give examples of language relating to (definace of) racism, cultural diversity and gender relations (Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013).

Compared to top-down taught official classes that aim to integrate desirable migrants, whilst alienating undesirable ones, alternative classes cannot be regarded as teaching the same language. Unless one thought of language as a mere tool, an empty signifier whose meaning, effects and reproduction solely depend on the (free) will of a universal speaker³⁴, it would not make sense to understand languages which are generated within radically differing projects and arguably have effects which are equally diverse, as the same.

Considering the aim of enquiring into the role of language for transformation from the margins, in Bourdieu's terms it would be now a matter of inspecting whether these projects challenge the established social order through teaching what could be seen as an 'alternative' language. This would mean to look at whether the projects may engage in the production of a heterodoxa. For the sake of such inspection, it will be useful to start by turning to Bourdieu's understanding of the reality of the social world as depending on the knowledge and the vision that one holds of it. According to Bourdieu, the dominant doxa is what, through a variety of mechanisms, including official language, reproduces and maintains consensus over the scientific and natural division of the social world (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 131). In order to act on the social world agents need to act on its categories of perception and on the very knowledge of it, by means of

³⁴ i.e. not distinguished along the axes of gender, race, class, sexuality, legal status, etc.

creating an alternative knowledge that would come to challenge the established order. Dominated groups have the possibility to constitute themselves as instituted groups through a “political labour of representation”, which would allow their experience to gain objectivity and thus existence in a social world that they can now attempt to change by means of what Bourdieu calls 'heretical discourse' or 'heterodoxa' (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 130). To such heterodoxa, a discourse and force that Bourdieu calls 'orthodoxa' is opposed, which pushes to the extremes the defence of the doxa against any heterodoxa, and through such struggle, the arbitrary and implicit character of the doxa itself is exposed and undermined.

According to Bourdieu it is not at all easy, however, to originate a heterodoxa, as the categories of perception of dominated groups are created by the very social order they attempt to change, while dominant groups find it much easier to reproduce the obviousness and necessity of the social world as it already is. Moreover, for a group to constitute and represent itself effectively as an instituted political actor and to change the social order by changing its representation, a voluntaristic approach is not enough. There needs to be self recognition and a reasonable degree of 'objective' counterpart in the properties that the group is endowed in the social world (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 135). In other words, challenging the social order is a complex process that sees dominated groups caught between the difficulty of creating new, alternative means of interpretation of the social world and the difficulty and necessity of having them recognised as such. Such recognition depends on specific material conditions in the social field, which cannot be called into being by act of will.

Taking into account simultaneously the difficulty of creating a heterodoxa and its possibility, one can take a closer look at the potential of, for instance, x:talk's classes as regards the constitution of migrant sex workers as political agents through making use of alternative language teaching. As mentioned previously, x:talk aims at teaching the

language needed at work, a work that is not recognised as such. One can argue that the language x:talk teaches differs from the language of official courses in that it verbalises and elevates what is relegated to the unspeakable, the victimised, the tabooed or obscene to the level of useful knowledge. For example, teaching and talking about sexual services offered or refused at work, implies the importance of mastering a stigmatised language for controlling one's work, rather than a language useful for those jobs migrants are expected and desired to undertake, as it is mostly the case within official language classes. Moreover, teaching such language can not only provide tools to work in better and safer conditions, but it can also help representing sex work as legitimate work and create a space for productive discussions around it. In so doing, x:talk might contribute to creating alternative or subversive ways of interpreting a social reality in which migrant sex workers are simultaneously victimised and stigmatised, and ultimately challenge the existing social order in which they are isolated and often deported (Davies, 2009; Mai, 2011; x:talk, 2010a).

However, even if it is not official or legitimate, the language taught in x:talk is still necessarily politically and socially charged, as it is constituted within the existing social order, and it cannot be void of reproducing dominant power relations. Moreover, thinking with Bourdieu, the institution and political efficacy of a group has to go through a complex process of authorisation and it has to be recognised as such in order to bring about change. Coming together to learn the language needed at work may not suffice for such constitution. It is also questionable that the language taught by x:talk would function as an actual alternative to the official language, rather than reproduce, by similar though not identical means the dominant social order. One could even argue that using sex work scenarios and vocabulary to teach English to people who are already doing that job could reinscribe the 'whore stigma' (Pheterson, 1993) onto them, or ultimately help maintaining the social order that has them working in an exploitative industry.

Similarly, in the Spanish classes taught by the Asociación de Sin Papeles the language is consciously chosen to promote dialogue, mutual exchange, challenging racist divisions and assumptions, and it is taught through music and plays using both Spanish and Wolof (common language in Senegal, Gambia and Mauritania). In this instance, the primacy and importance of the Spanish language is contested whilst the classes may become a site where the migrants and the non-migrants socialise and develop the language needed to organise together, claim their rights, and set change in motion (A., 2013; C., 2011). However, also in this case it could be argued that the language taught does not challenge the social order, risking to remain an isolated example for a limited number of migrants, which would, on a personal level, actually benefit more from learning straightforwardly the official language and its toolkit for 'integration'.

In the case of Worldword, because of dependance on government funding, the teaching content is a juggle between the demanded material and a curriculum that questions and contests racism, sexism and dominant power relations. In this respect, whilst still using the required books, teachers regularly bring in different material, which is discussed with students. So that, for example, within an integration course which, by definition should aim at teaching (i.e. imposing?) “positive German values and culture” (Pei, 2011, p.7, my translation), students get to talk about concentration camps, neo-Nazis, anti-racism and anti-fascism. Though contesting a typical integration discourse, the language taught in Worldword could also fail to be challenging and remain within the reproduction of the social order, especially given that, in the end, it rests within an 'integration course', and to pass the tests students have to master the required language and pass an exam (G., 2011; S., 2011).

Due to these ambivalences, it seems quite hard to pursue the path of attempting to read the language learnt and taught through these classes as purely alternative or heterodox. After all, what is being taught and learnt is undeniably the national language, its grammar and the linguistic and symbolic capital that goes with it. A Bourdiean

framework of analysis would probably end up linking learning (any) national language to the reproduction of doxa, unless it was backed by and it reflected corresponding changes in the social and political field. In other words, change through language seems to be only possible following the authorised acknowledgment of an instituted political group. Moreover, because of their the small-scale nature, according to a Bourdiean analysis projects like x:talk, ASP and Worldword would necessarily not be understood as disrupting or challenging social order. The field of action in which they would need to break the doxa would be the one of migration and citizenship, to which these groups would need to gain access and recognition. Because of their fragility and marginality, these projects would merely be dismissed as not bearing importance in such field. When I talk about challenging the social order however, I do not mean a revolutionary challenge which would overthrow the current system, but rather the destabilisation, through small-scale resistance from the margins, of conceptions of social order or dominance as pervasive and as only challengeable with acknowledged counterdiscourse (heterodoxa). Such conceptions minimise the political importance of small enterprises that work in highly localised sites as much as the possibility of agency from the margins. From a first look, the work of these projects does not seem to be leading to the creation of instituted political groups, but rather to challenge existing forms of representation and of politicality from the margins of three important yet fragile groups. It is not my intention to analyse change exclusively in terms of acknowledgment – not the least because of a strong attachment to the possibility of creating change and causing trouble from the margins without previous authorisation. I also do not wish to engage in reproducing a dichotomy between heterodoxa and orthodoxa, or between official and alternative language – dichotomy that is arguably present in Bourdieu's theory of language and power, and that would fail to account for internal power relations, impurities and crossovers. It is most likely that the same language taught could prove challenging and empowering for some and not at all for others, that this empowerment

would merely help the individual within the given opportunity structures, or that despite the intention of the teachers and activists involved, racist, sexist or homophobic language may slip in the classes.

Bourdieu's compelling theory is undoubtedly useful to unravel the reproduction of domination through official language, but it may prove somehow limiting if used to analyse the possibility of change and agency, in particular if stemming from the margins. Bourdieu does allow for social change through language, as heterodoxa is necessarily taking shape within and through language, but its very possibility, seemingly restricted to 'instituted groups', seems to leave little space for resistance by marginal groups, unless the current state of affairs is rife for it.

Feminist theorist Lisa Adkins, points out how Bourdieu's theory strongly relies on the idea that change can only occur when and if the social conditions for it are present, given that reproduction through habitus happens via adaptation of the latter to the social field through mimesis, and this mimesis is always effective: "it 'works'" (Adkins, 2003, p. 207). Adkins explains that "Bourdieu understands norms to be generally incorporated" and transformation through practice as determined by the social field (Adkins, 2003, p. 207). In other words, if language is to be understood as practice or habitus which incorporates and reproduces the social field through a faithful albeit generative mimesis, an alternative language can only become such, and engender transformation, if it is prompted by changes in the social field itself (and if it becomes authorised). If this were always the case, however, it would be nearly impossible to make sense of ambivalences and multiplicity, and of the fact that, for example, x:talk does teach a language which is ambiguous to say the least, as it cannot be seen as perfectly mimetic of the social field, or authorised, or void of reproducing power relations. Adkins understands the problem in Bourdieu's theory of practice as being situated precisely in its failure to account for ambivalences and for the possibility of transformation through it.

Again, Bourdieu's theory makes it hard to think of resistance from the margins. Adkins suggests to resolve this via “a conceptualization of mimesis which understands norms as never fully occupied and via an emphasis on the temporal aspects of practice” (Adkins, 2003, p. 207). Adkins' reference to the failure of faithful reproduction of norms and on temporality might be of aid to allow for the possibility of resistance from the margins. One opening in this direction is Judith Butler's understanding of the power of language (Butler, 1997). Her theory of language and agency shares with Bourdieu the analysis of the socio-political embeddedness and power of language and the rejection of a sovereign subject that confers meaning upon act of will. Butler's theory deviates from Bourdieu by contesting his foundational dialectic of authorisation and rather focuses exactly on temporality. I will now turn to it, in dialogue with the projects analysed.

Agency and the performative power of language—the Butlerian framework

So far, I have explored how language holds the power of reproducing dominant social relations and how such power cannot be used or manipulated by a mere act of will. Expanding her reflections on the power of language, Judith Butler argues with Althusser that we are constituted and formed within it, that language calls us into being and constitutes us as subjects, while it can accordingly constrain and injure us (Butler, 1997; McNay, 1999, 2003). Butler, like Bourdieu, does not see the power of language in language itself, or in the intentions of a sovereign subject. According to Butler, however, the illocutionary power of language, i.e. the power of language to perform an act by saying it, in the very moment of saying it, does not lie in its authorisation or in the established doxa, but it is gained and sedimented through its iterability and reiterations. Gaining its strength from repetitions in time, language is inscribed within

specific historical discourses which cannot be rid of by mere act of will. Thinking the power of language in temporal terms, it is impossible, for example, to voluntarily erase the injurious history that certain terms attached to sex work carry with them just by stating one's non-offensive intention. On the other hand, according to Butler, the resignification and reappropriation of once derogatory terms through repetition is possible precisely because of the iterability of language. Given that repetitions, due to their temporality can drift, stagger or discontinue, performative power can fail or take on new, unexpected directions. Hence, the re-signification of terms like 'queer' and the creation of a new political subjectivity under that same name were made possible through its repeated use in a variety of different political contexts (Butler, 1999). In this respect, political agency itself is possible, according to Butler, exactly because reiterations can fail or shift, even if they are not performed by people delegated with the authority to do so (Butler, 1997, p. 147). Butler's understanding of reiteration and iterability differs from Bourdiean repetitions through habitus in that she sees discourse and language as preceding and exceeding the subject, as constituting it but never fully determining it, whereas Bourdieu's sense of temporality in repetition is based on the successful mimesis of habitus and social field. Thus, rather than limited to an intelligible heterodoxa, for Butler change is possible beyond authorisation, from the margins as much as from the centre.

Indeed, following Butler's logic, one may argue that even if the sex workers involved in x:talk do not have the authority to de-criminalise sex work and cannot detach sex workers from their stigma by act of will, they may be engaging in a process of re-signification that could challenge such stigma. Moreover, such resignification would not be the outcome of a process of authorised constitution, but it would be stemming from sporadic, unexpected acts of resistance. It is the fact that language precedes and exceeds the speaking subject that makes resistance possible: on the one hand, it bounds it to intelligibility within its terms; on the other hand, it allows for the possible

resignification of these very terms. The discursive, dominant power intrinsic in language cannot be transcended, because it constitutes the subject and allows her to speak as such, but it can also fail to reproduce itself in a linear and consistent way, thus leaving the space for the subject to act and resist, deploying an agency that is rendered possible by its very linguistic constraints.

Indeterminacy and social context

According to Butler the unstable nature of resistance through language does not allow us to predict what the effect of our (speech) acts will be, or to ever discern whether an act will be an act of resistance or of resignification, or not (Butler, 1997). The indeterminacy inherent to Butler's theorisation of agency has been criticised by a number of other feminist authors, including Lois McNay and Terry Lovell, who saw in the abstraction of her theory a problematic lack of historical contextualisation of the social conditions for the possibility of resistance (Lovell, 2000, 2003; McNay, 1999). While Butler unpacks the possibility of agency through moments of slippage in discourse, she does not and cannot tell much about the social conditions of possibility for resistance, apart from that they are contingent. In this respect, while it may prove more viable than a Bourdiean framework in order to analyse the work of projects like x:talk, leaving open the possibility of agency and resignification through language, Butler's theory may not prove enough of an analytical tool in order to understand the historical and relational conditions for resistance, or even less so, its collective and relational process. Addressing this very aspect, McNay goes as far as accusing Butler's paradigm of negativity and reductionism to the symbolic. The Butlerian subject, McNay argues, is constrained and constituted by language in an abstract while overpowering way, which does not allow to account for the interaction of language with other systems

of power and for agency to stem from collective social practices and interactions rather than being left to the random jurisdiction of language (McNay, 2003, p. 149). Lovell, similarly, explains how an account of historical and relational agency is necessary in order to make sense of and to contextualise acts of resistance, such as the one by Rosa Parks, used by Butler as effective example for a performative act of resistance without previous authorisation (Lovell, 2003). Parks deliberately took a seat in the white-only section of a bus and refused to give it to a white person who was claiming it back in 1955, and her act was seen as pivotal to the civil rights movements in the U.S. While Butler sees this act as an example of the unpredictability of resistance and of the shifts of discourse, Lovell argues that Parks' was far from being an isolated act of resistance, but it came to be read as such because of the suitability of the person of Rosa Parks to be taken up as a representative of the civil rights movement: a middle aged, 'respectable' and well spoken woman, and because of the specific historical moment in which her act was understood and catalysed by a nascent movement (Lovell, 2003, p. 8). Elsewhere, Lovell argues that Butler fails to interrogate "the conditions favourable to the exploitation of these windows of opportunity for personal and social transformation", and thus her theory limits the possibility of exploring viable and effective political interventions (Lovell, 2000, p. 18).

Catherine Mills and Kathy Dow Magnus also raise concerns about Butlers' lack of analysis "of the production of local possibilities for political action" (Mills, 2000, p. 277) and about her underestimation of "the power of subjects to work together to determine their lives and the social conditions that structure their existence" (Magnus, 2006, p. 63).

The critiques of Butler sketched so far claim that single acts can never be isolated from the context in which they come to the fore and in which they have political effects, and that collective work and social conditions are crucial aspects for originating social change. These criticisms speak to my case of analysing the work of x:talk, Asociación

de Sin Papeles, and Worldword. First of all, the contexts in which these projects take place are of course of great importance, given that their politics are more oriented towards practices than isolated acts. While Butler allows for thinking unpredictable, spontaneous and sporadic change through language, the above critiques attempt to bring back to the foreground the elements of collectivity and social context. Yet, such elements, crucial to any analysis of social change, could prove again to restrict the significance of the work of small projects like the ones I look at in this thesis, unless they were part of a broader range of similar practices. This depends on the importance placed onto small-scale change and transformation. I believe that collective agency and a non-deterministic focus on social context would be rather crucial for the present attempt to account for the possibility of change through language from the margins. The classes and the language created and learned can be seen as enabling communication and organising and thus the collective and intersubjective processes of sharing knowledge, socialising and mobilising, such as street-sellers' and sex workers' mobilisations against the criminalisation of their jobs. While these processes are happening in a small scale, their significance cannot be limited to the unpredictable failures of dominant discourse, or to the possibility of single acts stemming from them. I believe that they are already significant in their existence and more specifically in their collective existence. These projects show how language is being used and produced in different ways through collective processes of organisation of classes and of other events around them, not just through isolated moments. The possibility of agency and change from the margins cannot be explained only in terms of a subject's agency through one specific act. The work of x:talk and ASP indicates the importance to have the tools to read agency from the margins through language as collectively generated. If challenging social change through language is possible, learning to read the ways it manifests itself is what is most pressing. Butler's theory does work for making sense of unpredictable change from the margins, and within small, highly situated sites, but it is

not delivering enough tools to read and understand the collective processes and practices in which the sex workers involved in x:talk or the street sellers in Asociación de Sin Papeles engage.

Resistance and resignification through language

The Butlerian framework seems to better account for the ambivalences present in and through language than a Bourdiean approach, because it encompasses the possibility of the simultaneous presence of oppressive and subversive elements and effects in language without excluding one or the other. Using Bourdieu's terminology, Butler's understanding of the power of language seems to allow for thinking hetero- and orthodoxa together, leaving open the possibility for resignification and change as much as its difficulty and ambivalences. In terms of the language produced in the classes, such an approach could not only help making better sense of the dangers of reproducing dominant and oppressive power relations through it, but also, and importantly, of the reason why through language itself, because of its performative power, change is possible.

However, while Bourdieu's theory makes it hard to think of change through language in the first place, Butler's theory does seem to relegate political agency to the possibility of change in the terms set by language. Another way of framing a problem inherent in Butler's theory, as it has been tackled by McNay (McNay, 1999), Mills (Mills, 2000), and Magnus (Magnus, 2006), is her reduction of agency and resistance to acts of resignification, to 're-acting', rather than as positive, interrelational acts of transformation. Mills expands on this, arguing that Butler's account of resistance as resignification is not problematic because it lacks contextuality or predictability, but because "resignification of the terms given to one by power is far from necessarily

subversive” (Mills, 2000, p. 276).

The Butlerian confinement of change through language to resistance through resignification is of great relevance to this research. If one looks at the language practices that take place within x:talk, what Butler allows to analyse is the *possibility* of resignifying hurtful, stigma-laden language through the repeated performance, in class, of a language for which sex work becomes a form of labour like most others. However important this would be for a project whose political aims include tackling criminalisation through tackling stigma, this is not the only practice in which x:talk is engaged. x:talk is about teaching a language needed in work situations as well as outside these, a language needed in order to be able to assert oneself and one's rights, in order to defend oneself, negotiate and socialise with each other. This language is likely to have an impact not only on the politically crucial resignification of terms like sex worker, prostitute, or stripper, but also in other social and political relations, including individual and collective political mobilisation for the rights of migrants, of sex workers, and of migrant sex workers (x:talk, 2009a, 2011a). Moreover, not only acts of resistance such as demonstrations stem from x:talk, but its practices of organising, of meeting, of knowledge sharing, of critical interventions and of research production (x:talk, 2010a, 2013), are all practices that would likely show little or poor meaning and potential if analysed exclusively within a framework of resistance through resignification through single acts.

Similarly, for a project like Asociación de Sin Papeles, where language is taught in an environment of common exchange and where such exchange leads to new socialities and political becomings, collective action, demonstrations and political achievements (Galafate, 2010), resistance through resignification is only one part of what is taking place through language and language teaching. There as well, collective processes seem fundamental and accounting for them through a Butlerian framework would not suffice to read and understand if and how they came about through collective agency and

interaction, beyond the slippages of discourse.

Finally, even the work of Worldword, where language teaching takes different political shape within and despite the official framework, would not be distinguishable at all from the work of any other official class, if resistance and resignification were to be thought of exclusively within the “terms given to one by power” (Mills, 2000, p. 276), i.e. if they can only happen unpredictably, regardless of the different collective and political processes in which language takes shape. A lacking attention to the context in which resistance may occur, risks levelling and equating the practices of all of these projects to those, for instance, of any official language class.

Beyond monolingualism—Bourdieu, Butler and Bakhtin

Thinking through collective practice, accounting for ambivalences and avoiding dualisms

One central question in this project is whether and how, with and through language teaching, collective processes of resistance and transformation by and within marginalised groups may take place. While, as just seen, a Bourdiean approach would seem to bind this possibility to transformations already happening at the level of social relations and to processes of authorisation and recognition, a Butlerian approach allows for this possibility, but roots it in the unpredictable power of language itself, thus seemingly precluding the chances of analysing its conditions and the existence of positive forms of political action beyond acts of resignification.

It is firstly to be learnt and retained from both Butler and Bourdieu that change cannot be predicted on the level of theory. Even if both authors have been criticised of theoretical over-determinism—Butler through a prevalence of language and discourse

over social practices (McNay, 2003) and Bourdieu of social field over habitus (Adkins, 2003), neither of them argue that change is to be predicted as it must be understood in the specificity of the very moment of its occurrence (Bell, 1999), and in the specific interaction between subjective experience and the possible in the social field (McNay, 2003). Secondly, it is crucial to understand that language is not malleable at will; and thirdly that it is likely to reproduce dominant norms.

However, it is important to note here that neither Butler or Bourdieu's understanding of language and of agency through it provide the tools to make sense of how and when language can be expression of domination and/or of transformation (or both) within the politics from the margins of x:talk, ASP and Worldword. While Bourdieu rests on a binary understanding of social change in big-scale terms, Butler's theory rests in the terms set by language, which allow for resistance only through unpredictable single acts of resignification. These projects however indicate both an ambiguity of language, which cannot be read dualistically as either transformative or oppressive, and a politics made of collective processes from the margins, which cannot be reduced to single acts. An understanding of language as repetition that can fail in specific moments would indeed suggest restricting the analysis to those moments, leaving the collective practices from which they emerge unexplored and equalling the language produced or the way it is produced in these projects to any official language class. While the latter is not yet to be excluded, I believe there is more to the politics of x:talk, ASP and Worldword than the simple chance to engender moments of resistance through signification. The strictly political aspect of the projects' collective practices through language will be addressed more thoroughly in the last chapter of the thesis. For now, I will turn to analyse how language works ambiguously and multiply in these projects through concrete examples, whilst looking for a theory of language that would help analyse how they differ from official language classes without needing to argue for their utterly transformative character.

I will take for first example a x:talk English class which looks at, critically reviews and addresses UK legislation around sex work. The language used is the language needed to understand and explain the legislation, its repercussions on the lives of sex workers and possible ways to address and act upon the problems caused. Typically, the students share their existing knowledge on the matter, then, together with the teachers, they examine the laws and the problems arising with it, in order to finally talk about hypothetical solutions. In such setting, different things may happen. So far, some students have showed interest in becoming active in the group around specific campaigns to decriminalise their profession, some have modified their involvement in the sex industry to risk less, while others yet have declared they actually supported the criminalisation of sex work, stating that high prices would be unjustifiable and clients would lose their fascination with it if it was not forbidden anymore. Such multiplicity of responses by the students are only one indicator of the ambivalences within these language teaching practices, which are about finding ways to communicate, to form and express one's opinion and acting accordingly through a common language. Can this language be seen as no different from the one taught in official language classes (where sex work would not be even part of the acceptable vocabulary)? Does this language have to be understood as either transformative or oppressive or can one make sense of its ambiguity and multiplicity? In order to answer these questions it is necessary to try and find a way to analyse language and its workings effectively, in a way that makes sense of or at least addresses its peculiarity.

Exploring the work of these classes and its repercussions on the social field with Bourdieu, one may be able to look for repeated practices (*habitus*) possibly contributing to social change, but when hitting the possibility of change through their language in terms of its hetero or orthodoxa, the ambivalences would be lost over the need to privilege one over the other in order to make sense of it. While in Butler's terms it would be possible to account for such ambivalences, change through collective

practices, communication and organisation would be left out of the analysis, and the multiplicity and ambiguity of language in process would not be detectable if not in its moments of failure.

Neither Bourdieu's or Butler's theories seem to be sufficient for analysing whether language can be deployed and function in multiple ways and what its possible role in the construction of collective and political subjectivities might be. The reason being that they both speak mono-lingually. For Butler, however unstable, the language that informs and constitutes us, that insults us and can be resignified is understood as *one* (metaphorical) language, that both subjects the subject and allows its agency. For Bourdieu, as Bourdiean feminist McNay suggests, language is one 'situated medium', which reproduces power relations and domination, and under specific circumstances, dictated by the interaction with changes on the social field, can be deployed by social actors' to create heterodoxic change (McNay, 2003). Neither Bourdieu or Butler provide the tools for analysing generative or productive power within different uses and effects of different languages, languages that cannot be understood exclusively in the Butlerian terms of resignification or reproduction of dominant discourses, or in the Bourdiean terms of successful or timely creation of heterodoxa. To analyse the language(s) that projects like x:talk deploy it is not enough to look at the power of language as one, whether as 'the' Butlerian language/discourse or as 'the' Bourdiean situated medium. Rather, it would be much more useful to look at how and whether through different languages or language usages subjects like the migrant sex workers and activists within x:talk get to improve their safety in work situations, come to mobilise for their rights and to socialise amongst each other, and ultimately come to engage in individual and collective transformation. In other words, what I believe is needed at this stage is an analysis of how different language uses may be generative of 'positive' changes and transformations as well as possibly reproducing dominant relations, rather than precluding differentiated analyses by relying on theories that look at language in general

terms, either as abstract, constitutive and shifting discourse, or as medium whose effectiveness is limited and situated. How could one otherwise make sense of the differences and of the simultaneity of a language of rights, spoken by stigmatised categories such as migrant sex workers, and of a language of integration and criminalisation taught in official classes? As I mentioned above, within such frameworks, one could at best analyse their similarities, and very likely conclude that they are not different at all. I do not rule out this possibility as I am not arguing for the need to mark a neat, let alone dualistic distinction amongst languages, but rather for the need to analyse the inherent multiplicity of language by acknowledging the existence of such diversity.

One central aim of this project is that of arguing against a dualistic take on language, as for instance, to say it with Bourdieu, either orthodoxic or heterodoxic. It might be as likely that the language taught by x:talk may reproduce domination, as that the language taught in an official language class may allow for politicisation rather than integration. The projects analysed suggest that certain practices of collective communication do bring about differential uses of language and possibly politicisation. Without narrowing the analysis to the methodologies of these projects (see Chapter 2 for a critique of strictly methodological approaches to language teaching), what I am looking for are the right tools to analyse these possibilities through a theory of language. One way to do so could be to integrate and expand on Butler and Bourdieu, to encompass the multiplicity and broadness of language, departing from the possibility of both unpredictable resistance from the margins and of situated and collective political processes.

Multiple languages, translation and its limits

In order to start sketching the viability of a theory of language as multiple, it might

be useful to look at how the language taught by x:talk, Worldword and by the Asociación de Sin Papeles comprises a variety of languages: a language of rights, of resistance, of dialogue, but also a language of norms, of social reproduction and of domination. Whilst one could also frame this in terms of the different components, aspects and characteristics of one language, I believe it is more fruitful to speak of metaphorical language as never monolithic, but composed by many languages, not least for the sake of analysing each of these in their own internal multiplicity. Through thinking of (metaphorical) language as internally diverse, multiple and shifting, the possibility for these projects to give rise to political subjectivities and to contribute to social transformation through it can be explored together with its margins of failure. For example, one can make sense of the possibility that some of the potential students of x:talk will feel uneasy, or even offended for being taught sex work terminology, while some other students will feel empowered by it, and others will develop the linguistic means that will lead them to socialise and mobilise with other migrant sex workers to defend and fight for their livelihood in the UK. Yet, how is it possible to analyse their efficacy and the extent to which these multiple languages do bring about what they say? Julie McLeod, in her 2005 re-reading of Bourdieu, argues against the need to decide a priori between freedom or reproduction, between the prevalence of field over habitus and between change and determinacy (McLeod, 2005). Grounding her argument on the renewed feminist interest in the Bourdiean frameworks as tool to understand and make sense of the changes in gender relations, she calls for the need for empirical research in order to look at “how change and continuity happen subjectively (and contextually)” (McLeod, 2005, p. 24). McLeod's argument against deciding a priori on the relation between habitus and field is to suggest a theoretical openness, rather than a belief in the ultimate knowledgeability of such relations upon empirical research. Such openness may prove to be a good departing point in order to approach an analysis of language as multiple, an analysis that would look at the practices and ambivalences of different

usages of language, in order to map and understand their situated and at the same time contingent role for social change and/or reproduction, or for both. Loosening up the a priori understanding of the relation between social field and habitus, and between norms and their reproduction, allows to understand the shifts and changes occurring within both and to make sense of these in a situated though unfixed way.

When engaging in an empirical analysis of the language(s) taught by x:talk, ASP and Worldword, this research does not attempt to pin down what language is subversive or transformative and what is reproducing norms, but to account for different ways in which different languages intersect with their speakers and with each other to allow communication, resistance and transformation. Once language is seen as multiple, the question and need for multilingualism as well as for translation will necessarily step in.

Turning back to Butler's more recent work on precarity and performativity (Butler, 2009), it is interesting to see that she takes on exactly the issue of translation. Butler points at how precarious, marginal and unlikely lives such as sex workers' can gain subject positions by appropriating and translating their claims "into the dominant language, not to ratify its power, but to expose and resist its daily violence" (Butler, 2009, p. X). Butler is referring here to an act of translation from ones' unintelligible language into a more normative one, through which claims can be raised. Here, Butler builds on her previous publication 'Who is Singing the Nation State' (Butler & Spivak, 2007) and looks at those performative enactments of right claims in total absence of any previous recognition of such rights. In her joint work with Gayatri Spivak, Butler analysed a demonstration by undocumented migrants in Los Angeles, USA, where the demonstrators sang the US national anthem in Spanish. Butler later develops on how this act of defiant performance of belonging is an exercise of freedom, an appropriation of a right of free speech by a precarious population who does not, by law have such

right, but acquires the power to claim it through the very act of claiming (Butler, 2009, p. X). Such claim does speak within the recognised norms (by singing the national anthem), but instead of faithfully reproducing them, it translates and performs them in a defiant, transformative way (by singing the anthem in Spanish). Through theoretically linking acts of translation with transformative right claims Butler opens up a further possibility to analyse language in its multiplicity, though also here relying on the analysis of one single subversive speech act.

The case Butler analyses is different from that of x:talk, ASP or Worldword in that the undocumented migrants rather explicitly enact their claim to citizenship, whereas the language(s) taught within these projects are less easily intelligible in such terms, and are not about the repetition of a single act. Yet, the emphasis on practices of translation may speak very closely to the work of these projects, which could be read as being about translating from the different languages spoken by some of their students into those spoken by other students, into the one(s) taught by the teachers in class and into the ones spoken at meetings and in socialising events. And, in the case of x:talk, as translating from the unintelligible and criminalised languages spoken by migrant sex workers into the languages spoken by the sex worker activists involved in the project, into the language of human rights and effective practice guidance spoken by NGO's and the UK's Home Office.

When talking about translation, however, one needs to be careful not to reproduce the dualisms or the fixities that I seek to avoid by thinking of language as multiple. Language as multiple does not merely imply that there is more than one language, and that each language is a separate system that needs to be translated into another. Focussing on translation could therefore even be politically counterproductive, reinscribing fixities onto the voices, lives and languages of both marginalised, precarious groups and dominant ones.

As mentioned above, I believe that it would be more productive to think of language as multiple, comprising a variety of languages with different effects, ownerships and power, which would be internally diverse themselves, as well as recognising the actual multiplicity of national and so called minority languages along the axes of class, working environments, gender, ethnicity and so forth.

It is also crucial to keep in mind that official language is a politically, socially and economically constructed language that dominates over many other (internal) languages, whilst being inscribed in a wider world wide scale of national language hierarchies. In this respect, one must take into consideration and emphasise languages not recognised as such, i.e. minority languages, as much as languages classified as slang, or hybrid languages that may allow communication and survival in informal, illegalised settings and industries, like the language that sex workers may speak with each other or with their clients and bosses at work, or languages of anger and rights. Again, no language, regardless of its positioning on the socio-economical, political and geographical map, should be seen as internally homogeneous, non-contradictory and self-identical, but rather possibly well contradictory, its boundaries porous and leaking. Such an understanding would be way more suitable in order to explain the ambivalences inherent to the language(s) at play within x:talk and other projects, as much as it would allow for thinking of resistance within dominant languages without rooting it exclusively in repetitions and resignification, but allowing for collective agency to come into play. In order to return and clarify this point, here where neither Bourdieu nor Butler seem to provide the sufficient tools to think through language in its multiplicity and collective agency within it, and where translation as a practice also fails to encompass the complexity of language, it will help turning to look at language in yet a different way, namely, as dialogue.

Indeed, the methodologies of x:talk, ASP and Worldword, similarly to those analysed in Chapter 2, are consciously structured around dialogue, around communication and on

statements and language bearing upon the previous and the next. Instead of limiting the analysis to methodology however, I will now explore the usefulness of understanding agency through language and language itself as dialogic.

Language as dialogic

One important philosopher that argued for the multiplicity of language, for agency within and through language and for the centrality of dialogue and communication is Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981; Bakhtine & Volochinov, 1977)³⁵. Bakhtin's philosophy of language, seen as precursory to the so called 'linguistic turn' (Mraovic, 2008, p. 284) shares with Bourdieu and Butler an understanding of language as historical, socially and politically charged – or, in Bakhtin's own terms 'ideological' (Ball & Freedman, 2004), and opposed to Saussure's 'abstract objectivism' (Bakhtine & Volochinov, 1977). Language is, for Bakhtin, dialogic, it always has an addressee and a context, and it is never individual, but always social – it finds its reality and its life in its utterances and speech, whose structures are social, and which constitute the very site where language is and can be transformed (Bakhtine & Volochinov, 1977; Mraovic, 2008). It is the very social, dialogical nature of language, and its resulting transformability through intersubjective and collective speech practices, that makes of Bakhtin's theories a promising integration and expansion on Bourdieu's and Butler's theoretical toolkits. For Bakhtin, language holds its power because of its social and dialogical dimension. This, as I will later go back to, is fundamental for thinking of language and its power as both entrenched in and acting upon historicity and political, social and economical developments, which take place within communication and interaction, in dialogue, rather than exclusively through mimesis and authorisation

³⁵ The authorship of part of Bakhtin's work is not clearly attributed to him or to his co-writers. In this thesis however, I refer to his theory of language and dialogue, which is equally present in different publications with different co-authors. Hence, for clarity, I refer to his name only.

(Bourdieu), or reiteration and resignification (Butler).

For Bakhtin, as for Butler and Bourdieu, language can be a prison, but not because of the Bourdiean difficulty, or as some would argue impossibility to transform and challenge the established order through language without prior authorisation in the social field, or because of the pervasiveness of language over human agency, arguably one of Butler's limits. Bakhtin believes that what renders language disciplinary are centripetal³⁶ regulatory forces that work to make it unitary, monoglossic (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981, p. 272). Interestingly, it is not only the dominant doxa that is monoglossic: to all social positions corresponds a monoglossia, an internally sealed-off, ideological language which aims at foreclosing the possibility of change. However, monoglossia is for Bakhtin actually a myth, since no language is ever entirely a single language, but within it, differing voices are always present and centrifugal forces strive against unifying ones. The only way out of the "tyranny of language" is polyglossia, the contestation of language as one, and heteroglossia, the contestation of the internal unity of each language (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981, p. 61).

The concepts of poly- and heteroglossia in Bakhtin's theory seem to work as a fruitful answer to the arguable monolingualism detected above in Bourdieu and Butler. The tyranny of language Bakhtin refers to matches with what prevented a viable understanding of political agency within language, viable in particular for making sense of the specificity and peculiarities of the language classes projects under analysis. In Bourdieu's framework, the opposition between orthodoxa and heterodoxa, which would not work to explain the complexities of the language taught by the projects, reminds of an opposition led by a monoglossic understanding of language and its power. While Bourdieu does account for polyglossia, distinguishing between dominant and subordinated languages, his theory would benefit from an understanding of different

³⁶ I use the Bakhtinian term centripetal to indicate forces that aim to converge in one point, hence to create unity. With centrifugal I instead mean those forces that stem from the centre but literally run away from it, attempting to open up, multiply and diversify.

languages as internally diverse, i.e. of heteroglossia. Through heteroglossia, the power of language in Bourdieu's terms could be decentred and displaced: from resting on authorisation, it would be shifted to the possibilities of struggle within each language and social formation. If indeed orthodoxa and heterodoxa were seen as possibly present at once in all language formations, with obvious degrees of difference to be scrutinised carefully with a focus on the interactive, dialogic moments and what changes they allow for, it may be possible to locate agency in language regardless of the marginality of its formation.

Judith Butler's theory of language and performativity, as opposed to Bourdieu's, could be actually read as heteroglossic, but could benefit from expanding on polyglossia. For Butler, the performative power of language is constitutive and pervasive, but its reproduction is based on reiteration and temporality, which may always fail, therefore leaving space to subversion and resistance. This could be read as allowing for diversity, or for the possibility of it, within language. But is polyglossia a theoretical option for Butler? I would say no. Even if in her later work Butler focuses on translation (which would indicate the existence of more languages), the issue remains around acts of translation which may make marginal voices intelligible within the parameters and under the terms set by ('the') language. Bakhtin helps decentring performative power through widening the spectrum, opening it up for a multiplicity of languages that even if differently positioned in the hierarchy of domination, do have the possibility of interacting and changing the terms of such domination, through dialogue.

Bakhtin explains his understanding of language through dialogism. Given that language is an entirely and necessarily interactive phenomenon and every utterance refers to an addressee, to an audience, an 'other' (even if imagined within one's very consciousness), its life and its becoming are entrenched with communication and crossovers. Unless the homogeneity of social positioning is postulated, the unity and statics of language(s) can

also not be sustained.

It is also important to go back to consider that for Bakhtin language is an entirely social phenomenon and an interactive part of historical processes, thus necessarily open to change. Through the possibility of transformation in language, social and political change can thus happen at discursive level through dialogue, heteroglossia and polyglossia. In more concrete terms, within every group ('sign community') that speaks the same language, thus shares approximately the same vocabulary and grammar, there will always be differently intersecting social interests and dispositions and every sign will potentially become the site of 'class struggle' (Bakhtine & Volochinov, 1977). Hooking back to x:talk, Asociación de Sin Papeles and Worldword, one can now think through the different languages at play and their intersection, considering the internal struggle within each of them, and attempt to understand the resulting implications for political subjectivity, collective struggle and agency. For instance, in x:talk, one can think of the simultaneity of different languages, of work, of empowerment, of rights, of struggle, of sexual identity, as much as of integration, privilege and legitimising. Analysing the interplay of all these languages would give insights into when and how one seems to prevail, to work simultaneously or intersect with the others, and what this would mean for the classes and for the political, collective projects they are inscribed in. These projects, as all settings where dialogue is fostered, take place in a situation of polyglossia, where different languages meet (the languages of the teachers and of the students in the first place) and in them, translation and cross-communication are privileged over teaching and treating the national language as unitary or monoglossic. In the Asociación de Sin Papeles not only the use of Wolof (the common first language of the students) is encouraged in class, but teachers are also asking the students to teach them their language. In the performance I attended in Summer 2011 that signed off the end of a course, both students and teachers sang and spoke in both Spanish and Wolof. In Worldword, the situation seems different, as there is never one common national or

minority language spoken in class. However, this does not prevent polyglossia to take place: in all of the classes I attended in 2011 and 2012, there were moments of translation between students and teacher using hybrid languages but with an emphasis over communication and dialogue. The teachers would not impose, as in many official courses, the use of only German, but rather saw the influence of other languages as welcome and beneficial. For instance, in one class I noticed how the teacher welcomed rather than prevented students pairing up with others of the same language backgrounds, fostering peer to peer exchange and support and challenging the widely subscribed idea amongst language teachers that the first languages of the students need to be left outside the classroom, which, in the context of classes for migrants is reflective of the emphasis put on the need to speak and live in the official national language³⁷.

In x:talk, instead, even if the situation is not always such that the students share one language, there are always assistants in class that can speak more than one language and can mediate communication. The use of the students' mother tongue is encouraged and included in class through comparisons, translations and knowledge sharing. In one class, taking place in a massage parlour, the students were all from Romania, and while only one assistant had a basic knowledge of their language they all could speak either Italian, Spanish, or German and we once had a full conversation about the boss and about how to act in order not to let him take advantage of its position of power using a mix of languages, excluding English, in order to prevent the maid (in this case an ally of the boss) from understanding. The specific topic of discussion was the boss requiring the workers to never refuse clients. What was discussed was how to be clear about what services one does not want to provide, without alienating the client and attempting to offer different services instead, but strongly refusing to perform anything unwanted, despite the boss' demands. Here there is an example of how, through the intersection of different languages, a new, communal one is created, a safe language from which to

³⁷ See De Genova's analysis in Chapter 2.

start finding collective and shared positions in respect to injustice and oppression at work, i.e. a first step towards organising. This can be thus seen as a clear example of how, through polyglossia, a politically important moment of communication for change took place –reflecting on power relations and thinking about linguistic strategies to go around them³⁸.

According to Bakhtin, "only polyglossia fully frees consciousness from the tyranny of its own language and its own myth of language" (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981, p. 61). Through polyglossia in the classroom, not only the primacy of value and the centripetal forces of monoglossia within the national language are questioned and challenged, but also new and multiple communication takes place that can lead to change and to the expansion into more, potentially subversive languages created collectively.

Moreover, the internal multiplicity of language explained by Bakhtin in terms of heteroglossia could explain the internal struggle, contradictions and complexity present in all languages, and more so in the languages produced and at play in the projects I am looking at, where acts of collective communication happen against the challenges of (in Bakhtin's terms) monoglossic, disciplining forces that contribute to controlling, hindering and criminalising migration. Through their criticality and attention to answerability and through an arguable openness to multiple voices, these projects, analysed with Bakhtin, seem to precisely complement and encourage the centrifugal forces that are there to prevent the regulation and oppression of monoglossia.

Furthermore, looking again at x:talk, but this time with an eye for heteroglossia, one will see that each of the languages at play will also be a site of internal struggle. Let's take for example the language of work: it could work to be the language used to get individual, best economical benefits in an informal, but still capitalistic industry. But it could also refer to the language needed to communicate with colleagues about working

³⁸ E.g. using persuasive language to convince the client of the advantages of certain services (that the worker is ready to offer) over the unwelcome ones proposed by him; or knowing in advance which worker does what in order to redirect the client to someone else and not lose him.

conditions, and it could lead to getting organised to attempt to change the industry.

Thinking of the simultaneity and intersectionality of polyglossia and heteroglossia through dialogue would then not exclude agency. On the contrary, agency is involved every time there is a language exchange, i.e. communication, at individual as well as at collective level. Not only the social and political can be made sense of in their relation to language, but also individual consciousness and agency. Consciousness itself is for Bakhtin deriving from social interaction and from the dialogical relationship between self and other. Being all of our actions and speech utterances directed towards one another, Bakhtin grounds his theory of agency on answerability, that is, on the possibility of speech and acts to gain different meaning depending on the different interactions and audiences that receive them. In other words, "Bakhtin maintains that agency is essentially determined by the subjectivity of another who can talk back" (Mraovic, 2008, p. 294).

Bakhtin's concept of agency thus differs to a great extent from Bourdieu's and Butler's. While for Bourdieu only the authorised voice can really 'talk back', for Butler language does not allow for agency within communication, as the moment of interpellation is constitutive regardless of any possible response. However, Bakhtin's dialogism should not, I believe, be read as differing from these authors in terms of being blind to power and domination. Undoubtedly, his work does not see the latter as restraining agency, and it probably deals insufficiently with hierarchies of positioning, and it would therefore benefit from a deeper analysis of these as found in the work of Butler and Bourdieu. However, what Bakhtin allows for is just the possibility of subjectivity and agency through language in any interaction, which does not postulate equality, but rather the chance to react or fight for it.

Retaining the importance of Bourdieu's and Butler's takes on language as constitutive and historical, Bakhtin's understanding of agency and transformation through language integrates their theories, proving viable for the present study of alternative language

teaching. Bakhtin allows both for an analysis of language's transformative power within and in spite of the constraints of the dominant social order and for a starting point to analyse the collective, organisational aspect of x:talk's, Worldword's and Asociación de Sin Papeles' language politics. The simultaneous presence of centripetal and centrifugal forces in teaching the national language accounts for the risks of reproducing dominant and oppressive language while not precluding the possibility of transforming this in dialogue.

In the Bakhtinian framework, however, there might be a risk of downplaying the different axes along which power relations are played out, that is, axes of gender, race, sexuality, class and legal status. Assuming that language is multiple and that agency takes place through answerability in dialogue opens up the question of how to analyse the differential positioning of the subjects involved in the dialogue. What Bakhtin provides is a way to think through change without being determined by positionality. The unpredictable responses happening through dialogue are indeed not bound to the position of the speakers, though they will be influenced by it. It is impossible to predict a response in dialogue inasmuch as it is always strictly depending on the result of an interaction. The resulting meaning and replies are not depending from one or the other interlocutor, but from the moment in which the two meet in dialogue, and they are not reducible to any of the two (or more positions involved). In this sense, Bakhtin accounts for change from marginal positions. However, saying that agency is not determined by positionality does not suffice in order to analyse the role of the latter in change and transformation, which is of central importance to this study. Saying that positionality does not hinder agency through language should not equal saying that it plays no role at all.

From dialogue to political change from the margins

The theoretical work undertaken in this chapter was a necessary step for being able to develop premises that would make sense of the way marginalised groups resist domination through language. It was crucial, on the one hand, to dig into the pervasive and dominant power of language, not to end up assuming the possibility of agency through language or of the creation and development of an own language from marginalised positions as much as from positions of authority. On the other hand, it was essential to prove that agency from the margins is not precluded by language, which rather than being understood in dualistic terms as either dominant or alternative, should be read as multiple and simultaneously entailing oppressive and liberating aspects and effects.

Authors like Bourdieu and Butler have provided analyses of language and power that deepened an understanding of its reproductive power, and accounted for the impossibility of using language as a mere tool to one's will and intentions. Bourdieu's contribution is to be located in his analysis of the political and economical conditions of emergence of official, 'correct' language, and in his insistence on the importance of positionality for analysing the power of speech. However, his emphasis on authorisation proved not viable for an analysis of the projects in this thesis, given that they indicate politics without authorisation. If one was to follow Bourdieu, there would be little to analyse about the work with language of the alternative language classes projects, apart from, probably, their superfluousness. The latter seemed too simplistic a conclusion, especially after having considered the importance of alternative projects in the current socio-political context. Butler helped exactly there, as her theory moved away from authorisation, identifying ruptures with the given as depending from failed moments in the repetition and reiteration of language itself. Butler was useful to account for unpredictable digressions and disruptions, and her theory of resignification particularly

spoke to the experiences of the projects. Nevertheless, Butler's theory was also not providing the necessary interpretative instruments for accounting for political collective work through language. Her theory was leaving little to interpret apart from the mere possibility of, one day, transformative moves through the conditions set by language itself.

The realisation of a problematic dualism between alternative and official languages in Bourdieu, and of the overpervasiveness of language over human agency in Butler, indicated the fact that both theorists had a rather unitary understanding of language (as homogeneous in either its doxa, orthodoxa or heterodoxa for Bourdieu, and in its reproductiveness or failure thereof for Butler). The consideration of the simultaneity of a variety of different elements of oppression, rupture, rights, transformation, resignification, hierarchisation etc. within the language taught in the projects dealt with pointed at the fruitfulness of seeing language in its metaphorical sense as tendentially multiple, and of acknowledging the fact that there are many, internally diverse concrete languages that intersect and interact towards an infinite multiplicity of meanings. It was Bakhtin now who provided the tools to understand language as multiple and not unitary. According to the author's theory, the forces that tend to portray language as unitary are the same that seek to construct one universal model of understanding and governing the social political world. To these unitary forces he contrasts the multiplicity of languages (what he calls heteroglossia), and the internal diversity of language per se (as metaphoric power), and of each language (what he calls polyglossia). Multiplicity in language and languages seemed a very useful interpretative model for the work with and through language of the alternative classes projects, and for understanding the workings of language in general. Finally, another fundamental aspect of Bakhtin's theory sets the terms of the possibility of agency and change from the margins through language: dialogue. The multiplicity of language is indeed connected to how it is transformed and brings about transformation in dialogue, through communication and

interaction between different speakers. From dialogue, unexpected and undeterminable outcomes can be expected, that generate new meanings and possible acts.

Understanding the work of and through language as multiple and depending on communication and dialogue shows a very promising way. Multiplicity points at the fact that more languages can be spoken at the same time, without the need to classify them as either dominant or alternative, while the unpredictability of the answer of the interlocutor opens up the possibility for the unauthorised to cause and enact changes, in that she can respond in different ways and through different languages within a dialogue, as much as the reaction to her speech can take different shapes and directions. Dialogue is then where political agency gets grounded, that is, in the capacity of generating change through provoking answers and through answering within dialogical processes.

Interestingly, locating agency in the unpredictability of the result of dialogue and of communication, is also the theme of a few critical pedagogy reflections. I am not talking here about Freire, who saw dialogism as a means to unveil and act upon existing realities, but about the analysis of English for Action, who situated the creation of change and understanding in the very unpredictability of the students' responses and inputs (Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013, p. 32). Similarly, the reflection of Bayham on language classes for asylum-seekers and refugees, directly links agency with the Bakhtinian understanding of answerability and improvisation. Through interruption and unpredictable responses, students actively provoke the contingent responses of the teacher and show their involvement in the learning process (Baynham, 2006, p. 27). As discussed in Chapter 2, the approaches of critical pedagogies would benefit of further enquiry and tools to understand what, in their methodologies, is the key to the possibility of change and transformation. Whilst the above contributions suggest that the cruciality of the Bakhtinian dialogue for agency within language did not get fully undetected, critical pedagogies would also need, like Bakhtin's dialogism itself, to

further analyse when, how, and from which positions agency through dialogue turns into transformation and change. The present analysis of language and agency helps answering two of the issues left open within the analysis of critical and radical pedagogies. On the one hand, it makes sense, through an understanding of agency through language in dialogue, of the possibility for migrants in marginalised position to develop their voice; on the other hand, it avoids and challenges binary understandings of either transformative or oppressive methodologies rooting the possibility of agency and change in the dialogical and multiple nature of language itself, which can be and is enhanced through dialogical methodologies but is not restricted to them.

However, the present dialogical understanding of language and agency does not seem enough to qualify when and why change is transformative or when and how it gains its political character or value. Indeed, within Bakhtin's theoretical framework, it remains indefinite how to distinguish an analysis of the politicality within language from the margins and from other positionalities in general. More generally, it remains unclear how to recognise when exactly a dialogue would engender political change from the margins. In relation to political agency, Bakhtin's theory addresses the important aspect of class in the struggle over signs and language, and it does account for the politicality of language, but it does not deal directly with the political becoming of differently positioned subjects through language.

Because this thesis is about the possibility of transformation through language from the margins, it has been crucial to first deal here with the politicality of language focussing partly on its metaphorical meaning. However, in order to make sense of the mobilisation and of the political work of groups that are sought to be excluded from politics and from citizenship, arguing for the possibility of change and transformation from the margins is only the first step. Bakhtin's agency in and through language and dialogue conveys that this possibility is intrinsic in the very dialogical and multiple nature of language, but it

still proves vague in regards to when and how transformative politics through language takes place, and how it is specific or differing depending on the positionality of the subjects. It is for this sake that I will now turn to another set of theoretical tools which in the coming two last chapters will be set in dialogue with Bakhtin's theories and with the politics of x:talk, ASP and Worldword: Engin Isin's 'Acts of Citizenship' (Isin, 2009, 2012; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Isin & Saward, 2013).

Chapter 5 | Language and Citizenship Revisited

The previous chapter focussed on the possibility² of agency within language, looking at the dominant character of official language, at its constitutive, reproductive and performative power, and, finally, at its scope for change through multiplicity and dialogue. The example set by the three language classes projects in this research suggests that language can be taught, learnt, spoken and recreated in different ways, which may engender transformation and challenge the dominant order that is reproduced through official language (Bourdieu, 1991). With Bakhtin, a promising possibility of change through language is articulated, which focusses on the multiplicity of language, on the dialogical and interactional character of communication and of the creation of (new) meaning through it.

This theoretical journey to find agency in language has been driven by the wish to account for political subjectivity, transformation, and ruptures, or better disruption within and through language. These concepts link back to the projects that form the empirics of the thesis. Political subjectivity refers to the acquisition and creation by those migrants predominantly seen as excluded and marginalised of a subject position within and through language from which to assert claims to rights, to collectively organise, and hence to become political. It refers to the sex workers in x:talk who come to participate in migrant sex workers rights campaigns, it refers to the street sellers who co-organise campaigns for their decriminalisation, and to all the possible language

learners whose language knowledge acquisition comes hand in hand with a reformulation or development of their political engagement, rather than assimilation in the order of things that wants them marginalised and lacking rights.

Transformation is what may happen at the level of language through the creation of new meanings, of new claims to rights, of new political subject positions, through resignification, as well as through dialogue, and through political mobilisation. Transformation is not limited to big-scale revolutionary restructuring of sociality and of the political system. It relates to the recognition that marginalised migrants do speak, engage in dialogue and claim their right to do so, to be, live and work where they are. Finally, transformation has to do with agency, with the possibility of bringing new and unexpected nuances and meaning through language, despite its repetitions, conventions, and active role of reproduction of domination and social order. It has to do with breaking the apparently linear repetitions of the social order and of habitus maintained through language, creating a rupture, a breaking point from which to depart, towards the new and unexpected, from marginal and fragile positions. Hence, transformation of the given is necessarily linked to disruption.

Chapter 4 analysed Bourdieu, Butler and Bakhtin to enquire in the possibility of agency, political subjectivity, transformation and disruption in language. Before that, I came across important work that deals with migration and language policies, as well as radical pedagogies, and language and agency. After looking at the exclusionary character of language policies on migration, after dipping into the potential of critical and radical language teaching, and after enquiring into language's power per se, I have come to a turning point where I need to expand on the aforementioned concepts of political subjectivity, transformation and disruption, in order to enquire about the meaning of migrants' political mobilisations, and claims to rights through language. It was crucial to indicate its possibility, to move beyond the mere empowerment that official language knowledge provides, and to question an understanding of national language as merely

exclusionary. It is now time to ask more specifically about when and how these possible politics become transformative, and about their influence and rupture from the order that instrumentalises the power of official language to reinforce and maintain citizenship as restricted to desirable subjects. In other words, there is still need to understand what makes the alternative projects of this research and the subjects involved in them legible as political actors.

For this purpose it is useful to turn back to the relation between language and citizenship, which was the starting point of this thesis. It is now time to enquire specifically in this relation, not merely from a point of view of language as a means to filter and exclude migrants from citizenship as membership, but from the way in which language allows and mediates contestation, disruption and transformation of citizenship by migrants themselves.

As argued in Chapter 1, through official language the political subject that is sought to be reproduced and legitimised is ultimately the (good) citizen. Migrants are filtered through language policies and are granted more or less rights depending on their 'desirability'. The ultimate model, the first position on the scale of political inclusion, rights holding and legitimisation is undoubtedly the citizen. It is the citizen the figure that governments present as the subject of politics and of official language, the actor holding rights and duties.

It is, however, the purpose of this research to analyse the possibility of becoming political of non-citizens, non-status migrants within and through language. In Chapter 4, after a journey through Bourdieu, Butler and Bakhtin, the possibility of subversion, of transformation, of creating something new through language was located in the dialogical and interactive character of language itself, rather than in the authorisation of the speaker. Hence, non-citizens, non-status migrants can through language make a change and become political subjects. However, through analysing language and agency it was not spelled out when exactly this happens or when this can be read as such. In

order to do so, in this chapter there will be a change of focus from language to citizenship.

After having analysed in Chapter 1 and 2 how citizenship, as exclusionary access to rights, is reinforced through official language, and after focussing on language to ground agency, I intend to now look at how citizenship itself is possibly challenged and transformed by non-citizens and at how, through disrupting and transforming citizenship through and with language, political subjectivity from the margins is constituted.

The next step is therefore to expand on the meaning of migrant rights politics through language by looking at the connection between the latter and the transformation of citizenship as we know it. Understanding citizenship as a terrain of struggle and of contestation for marginalised groups, rather than as mechanism of exclusion will introduce an important political dimension to the work done so far with language and agency from the margins. At the same time, inscribing and analysing the centrality of language for rights struggles and the making of citizenship will enhance new understandings of the latter, bringing to the fore how language classes may produce undesired political subjects engaging in transforming citizenship.

The theoretical repertoire that will be of great usefulness for this move, will be Engin Isin's acts of citizenship (Isin, 2005, 2009, 2012; Isin, 2002; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Isin & Seward, 2013). Challenging exclusionary understandings of citizenship, Isin shows how the subjects seemingly at its margins of are actually fundamental to its making. Rather than reproducing citizenship as it is, they enact and transform it. Introducing Isin's work I explore the link between citizenship and language from the angle of transformation, starting from unpacking dominant understandings of citizenship, building on the importance of the act for their disruption and of the enactment of the right to claim rights for the constitution of new political subjectivities. At the same time, language and its centrality to politics will inform and give new inflections to my reading of Isin's acts of citizenship.

Citizenship and exclusion – the absent agents

One of the critiques that was raised in the first two chapters in respect to the existing literature on language testing for citizenship and on critical language teaching is that, with the exception of *English for Action*, both fail to address non-status migrants or migrants working in the informal industries, i.e. those who are likely not to have the possibility to enrol for a language test or in a language class. While scholarship on language testing hardly engages with acts of resistance to language policies at all, the authors writing on critical language teaching do focus on social change and transformation, but they tend to concentrate on empowerment and claims to rights by migrants who mainly already are in the process of inclusion into citizenship, rather than those who are illegalised and lack any official status.

The literatures considered so far look at language policies in the context of what is read as exclusionary citizenship. Their focus on recognising and denouncing the logic of exclusion within EU citizenship policies is however one of the reasons why the agency of the migrants remains absent. It is actually through looking at citizenship and problematising the dominant exclusionary frameworks around it that new concepts of political agency and subjectivity may emerge which encompass possible acts of resistance and disruption by subjects who are mostly seen as marginalised, victimised, or criminalised, like undocumented migrants or migrant sex workers. The logic of exclusion is deeply rooted in dominant understandings of citizenship. This is why it will first come useful to start from those.

Western dominant political thought notoriously and historically pictures the citizen as

the legitimate political being, the one who is constituent part of the polis as political unit and can therefore be active in it, taking part in decision making, electing its representatives, representing others if elected, having rights and duties (see e.g. Marshall, 1950, 1964). Citizenship in turn is seen as the mechanism through which the polis (later on the state, and the nation) expresses and maintains its unity, by defining who are the subjects who make politics. The fact that citizenship was (and is) far from universal is renowned. In the so called first steps of western citizenship only adult men soldiers were recognised as Greek citizen: slaves and women were excluded from the polis. Throughout history, the exclusion of women, plebeians, workers, outsiders, aliens has been fundamental to the definition of the political unit. At present, in the EU as in all western countries, these figures are mainly asylum seekers, non-status migrants, migrants working in the informal, illegalised sectors, single mothers, prisoners etc. Dominant narratives of politics and political beings concentrate on the dominant subjects, the citizen, and deem to the realm of exclusion, of having no-part, all those aliens against which the former is constituted (Isin, 2002).

It is crucial to realise how citizenship has not been functioning as a mechanism of equality and unity but it has always had its counterparts, its aliens. Yet, saying that it is exclusionary does not challenge or shake the foundations of what the dominant classes and the beneficiaries of citizenship rights have been portraying political subjectivity to be, that is, attribute of the citizen, and not of aliens (Isin, 2002).

To say that citizenship is exclusionary demystifies the supposed universality of politics. However, as Isin importantly pointed out, it does hide and downplay the political being and active role of the aliens in the making of citizenship itself (Isin, 2002). Far from being aliens that have no part in citizenship and hence politics, these are integral to its constitution, they are made into outsiders by the same constituent process that makes the citizen such, and they are therefore as necessary for citizenship as citizens themselves (Isin, 2002, p. 4). To consider outsiders as totally excluded from citizenship means

seeing them as preexisting its arbitrary constitution, rather than as made through and by it (i.e. naturalising them as migrants, asylum seekers, refugees etc.). The logic of exclusion also contributes to hide the political presence of non-citizens, and it is well conciliable with the dominant narratives of citizenship, those made by the dominant subjects, that represent citizens as the only uncontested political agents making politics in a political unit, and citizenship as a 'privilege', not a right for those who are not born into it (Home Office, 2013b). Seeing non-citizens as merely excluded and citizens as uncontested agents hides all the struggles that throughout history have made of citizenship a battleground, rather than a stable, unitary concept. As Isin recalls, the historical images of the Greek, the Roman or the medieval citizens are timeless and they do not feature any struggles for the rights to the polis between warriors and kings, peasants and warriors, plebeians and patricians or artisans and the merchants (Isin, 2002, p. 2). These struggles were however present throughout history. They indicate that rather than excluded from making politics, outsiders were -and are- actors struggling over their access to the polis, who question the naturalness of the position of the dominators, unveiling their arbitrariness. Doing so, they actually become political and redefine citizenship by constituting themselves as citizens, as insiders rather than outsiders (Isin, 2002, pp. 275-276).

Going beyond the exclusion/inclusion dualism surrounding studies about and theories on citizenship is an urgent move towards the potential of using this concept to analyse the political becoming of non-status migrants through language. Citizenship is nowadays still predominantly understood in naturalised, exclusionary terms, which are justified through a series of mechanisms that define who is officially and legitimately to be called a citizen. In order to inquire further in the destabilisation of such dominant understandings it will be useful to now look at how they are constructed and what theoretical alternatives are available.

Citizenship as status, habitus, or enactment

In the contemporary dominant western imaginary citizenship can be said to have a twofold manifestation. On the one hand, it symbolises the move towards modern civilisation and democracy; on the other hand, in a context of exclusion and of different-status migration, it is connected to being allowed and legitimated to live, work, and participate in the political life of the place one finds oneself in. In other words, citizenship is widely seen as a material right to membership into society, state and nation, which is either 'naturally' obtained (by blood, birth, or ancestry) or legally gained (by residence, by marriage, by tests) and then practiced (thorough voting, volunteering, paying taxes).

In his recent work on acts of citizenship, Isin analyses the meaning of the dominant conceptions of citizenship and the current debates about what is actually called citizenship, in order to reformulate its history and present (Isin, 2009, 2012; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Isin & Saward, 2013) .

Isin argues that citizenship has so far been generally understood as membership, while studies about it have focussed on citizenship as status and on citizenship as practice, and some have seen and opposed citizenship as empowerment to citizenship as domination. Citizenship as status, explains Isin, is predominant in studies that “focus on issues of residence, naturalization, passport, immigration, alienage and deportation” (Isin, 2009, p. 369). These are mainly concerned with how citizenship is obtained, according to which regulations and by whom. The majority of the literature on language testing and citizenship can be seen as referring to citizenship as a status whose access to is guarded and managed through the testing system.

To understand and analyse citizenship as practice means to focus on the repeated actions and practices that make the citizen an active participant to the political unit. Although involving a difference of focus, reading citizenship as practice is not opposed to

citizenship as status, it is rather complementary to it, as it implies the repetition of legalised and scripted forms of actions and practices by status-holders. It concentrates indeed “on integration, cohesion, multiculturalism, education, nationalism and transnationalism” (Isin, 2009, p. 369). Citizenship as practice is also known as citizenship as habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; Isin, 2012, p. 110). The practices referred to are indeed those repeated actions that follow the legalised, authorised script. In other words, they are the habitus through which the so called 'active citizen' performs and reproduces citizenship as it is. Citizenship as membership can be interpreted and read in many ways (status, habitus, empowerment, transformation, oppression, or all of these together) but in all cases it does not account for disruption, for transformation, and for the political influence and presence of outsiders – before they acquired citizenship.

Understanding citizenship as status and/or habitus, insofar as it refers to the legitimisation of who is to be political in the state or nation, would support both a logic of exclusion and an argument according to which the national language serves to the reproduction of the 'good, active citizens' and therefore leaves little space for disruptive politics from outsiders, from the margins.

Isin explains how current debates include also views of citizenship as empowering and as preventing the ruling of one class over the other (Isin, 2009, p. 369). These views mean indeed that once gained by the dominated class, citizenship leads to empowerment and that the struggle for inclusion into it is an expression of social movements. Radically opposed to citizenship as empowerment is viewing it as principally serving the rule of dominated classes, which is another position taken in current debates. In this sense, citizenship should be thrown overboard as it is inherently about legitimising domination and cannot but reproduce it (Isin, 2009; Isin, 2002; Mann, 1987; Stewart, 2000; Williams & Macedo, 2005).

At this point, Isin makes two very important observations regarding citizenship. First, citizenship should not be understood in exclusive terms, as it is both about status and

habitus and it can be simultaneously empowering and oppressive (Isin, 2009, p. 369). Citizenship as gained membership does obviously give empowerment to those previously not holding it (e.g. women gaining the right to vote). Moreover, as Isin himself argues, it is as much a battleground over which to fight and claim rights (and thus become political) as it reproduces dominance, given that, in the moment of its obtainment and constitution it always brings about its outsider and tends to conceal this with the logic of exclusion (Isin, 2009, p. 369). This leads to Isin's crucial second observation that the current debates on citizenship completely fail to account for the emergence and the agency of new figures: figures who resist fixed categorisations (Isin, 2009, p. 369) and despite not holding the status of citizens 'act as such', become claimants of rights and justice through creative acts that break the habitus of citizenship and bring about social transformation – these acts are what Isin calls 'acts of citizenship' (Isin, 2009; Isin & Nielsen, 2008). It is indeed citizenship as enacted that will integrate, add and expand the current limited conceptions of citizenship as status or habitus, by allowing to overcome the logics of exclusion and by reformulating political subjectivity and agency. It is also through acts of citizenship that political change through language will find its subjects, examples and explanation, while the centrality and importance of language and its dialogical dimension will integrate and expand the understanding of enactment. I will come back to this after unpacking what is actually meant by 'acts' and specifically 'acts of citizenship'.

An act happens, according to Isin, when an action performed by a person sets a precedent, produces something new, a rupture with the given, and constitutes the person that performs it into a subject, an agent, that acts from a specific subject position. For an action to become an act it needs to be read and interpreted as such. It is the very possibility of acting that makes agency possible. And while one can think of many different acts, of love, kindness, hatred, etc., Isin also introduces 'acts of citizenship'

(Isin, 2012; Isin & Nielsen, 2008).

What if citizenship were not only performed by members, but it were also enacted and thus disrupted and transformed by both its members *and* outsiders? According to Isin, acts of citizenship should not be related to the status of the actors, but to their enactment of “the right to have rights” (Isin, 2009, p. 371). An act is an act of citizenship when it “produces subjects as citizens”, even if they do not hold such status (Isin, 2009, p. 371). For Isin, citizenship is indeed a relation rather than membership, and subjects, as well as abjects, do not merely ask for inclusion into it, but they transform it, challenging the 'modes and forms' that regulate it (Isin, 2009, p. 372).

Examples of transformative acts of citizenship given by Isin include acts of protest and resistance by advocates of the civil rights movement in the 1950's US, or by the suffragettes in the early 1900's Britain, as the aforementioned Rosa Park's act of reclaiming the seat reserved to the whites on public busses, or suffragettes going in hunger strike for the recognition of their status as political prisoners (Isin & Nielsen, 2008, p. 18). Reading these acts as acts of citizenship allows for an understanding of political agency that is not bound to membership and it unveils how the 'excluded' is actually integral to citizenship, as she can, and does enact and transform it. Indeed, given that the excluded has no rights, in the very moment in which she claims the right to have rights, she does not obtain the status of citizen, but *acts as* a citizen whose rights are due and therefore shows the arbitrariness of legitimacy and disrupts its unity.

Citizenship as enactment accounts for unexpected changes and transformations that come from members as well as non-members. Acts of citizenship can be enacted by institutions like international courts as well as by outsiders, they are about reinventing politics through the emergence of new subjects of rights and therefore making for the possibility of ruptures with the given. In my reading of Isin, such ruptures with the given are however not to be considered in dualistic terms, as the moments in which 'the' disruptive discourse breaks from the given order or those in which 'the' revolutionary

subject acts. They are much rather examples which allow reading and recognising how a binary understanding of in or out, of big scale revolutionary change or of repetition of domination is not sustainable. It reproduces divisions, by fixing and reconfirming the two poles. As I will develop after having further explored Isin's theory, citizenship as enacted, understood through language and dialogue, will help detecting how the practices of x:talk, ASP and Worldword can be read as enactments of citizenship through a variety of fragile yet transformative acts, by introducing an analysis of how becoming political subjects works for marginalised subjects in marginal sites.

When citizenship is enacted, not only new subjects are produced but also specific settings which become “new sites of contestation, belonging, identification and struggle”, i.e. new sites of citizenship (Isin & Saward, 2013, p. 27). Such sites destabilise the conventional, legitimised settings of politics (the agora, the parliament, voting booths etc.) and allow to better analyse citizenship as a relation and a contested ground, as they are not related to a fixed spatial setting, but stretch across boundaries (a site of citizenship can be the body, as is the case for pro-choice women fighting for their rights to abort; or it can be a church occupied by sans-papiers protesting for their right to stay; or it can be the riots-ridden street in times of anti-government protests). Beyond sites, Isin adds another analytical tool that is needed and produced in the analysis of acts of citizenship: 'scales'. Scales come in to substitute the traditional calculable quantities and width of politics, going beyond and destabilising concepts like states and nations, as they remain unfixed and undetermined until the very interpretation of an act takes place. In this sense, citizenship can be enacted and transformed not only within macro entities of states or revolutions, but also within much smaller scale sites, from which unlikely subjects can act as citizens. Language classes, as I will argue at a later stage, with their limited but theoretically and politically significant scales, can therefore potentially also be such sites – when citizenship as political subjectivity is enacted from the margins through them.

To say it with Isin: “To investigate how new actors, scales and sites of citizenship shift and emerge means to investigate acts of citizenship – those deeds by which actors constitute themselves (and others) as subjects of rights” (Isin, 2009, p. 371).

Re-reading the literature previously reviewed through the lenses of the current debates on 'what is called' citizenship sketched by Isin (Isin, 2009, p. 368), it appears that the literature on language testing understands citizenship mainly in terms of inclusion and exclusion, i.e. as either a status that, once obtained, determines people's belonging to a nation and society (Milani, 2008; Shohamy, 2009; Wodak, 2010), or as reflected in a national habitus, which in turn gets reinforced through language tests (Milani, 2008; Wodak, 2010). Even if the aim of these texts is to criticise the way access to citizenship is managed through increasingly complex requirements, including language tests, they do not go much further than envision a different model of inclusion, transnational and cosmopolitan rather than national, based on personhood rather than nationhood (Shohamy, 2009, pp. 54-55). Such understanding fails to address the existence of new actors and claimants who through their claims to justice or to the right to have rights may disrupt and challenge the common understanding of citizenship as membership or habitus (Isin, 2009). Amongst these new actors are asylum seekers, undocumented migrants and migrant workers in the informal economy, i.e. those subjects that are completely missing from the analysis of language testing as well as from most literature on critical language teaching. In this literature, an emphasis on empowerment and inclusion indicate an alignment with understandings of citizenship as practice or habitus. Much theoretical work on critical pedagogies indeed focuses on students' empowerment, on the acknowledgment of their oppression, on the re-valuation of their first languages and on the development of language skills and tools to defy oppression and the reproduction of hierarchies, but they are vague as to how change would take place beyond the classroom, suggesting that the empowerment itself would make it

happen. In terms of citizenship, given that these works largely do not engage with the access of undocumented migrants to possible classes, a focus on the empowerment of the students/migrants arguably indicates more of a logic of inclusion into or empowerment to practice citizenship than of enactment and transformation of it.

An interesting exception is to be found in *English for Action*. This project not only is open to non-status migrant, but also poses its emphasis on change and transformation outside of the classroom. Interestingly, in their recent report on the meaning and understanding of integration in ESOL classes, the teachers reporting highlighted the importance of the unexpected unfolding of both classes (Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013, p. 32) and of possible action arising from them (Bryers, 2013), detecting the problematic inherent to the concept of integration and explaining how the classes themselves are a site where the latter is discussed and complexified, through dialogue and exchange amongst students. Bryers goes as far as reading these classes as a “site of integration in action”, contesting the mainstream understanding of integration as a one or even two way process and referring to it as more of a “spaghetti junction”, where belonging gets renegotiated in a variety of different setting and scales, rather than as mere integration of two counterparts into one nation (Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013, pp. 32-34).

This understanding of a language class where migrants engage in contesting the meaning of integration risks reproducing the problematic assumption that however contested and complexified, integration is the axis along which outsiders are to manage or contest their belonging(s) into the receiving nation (again, suggesting an understanding of citizenship as *habitus*).

Yet, stressing the creation of change and transformation through action initiated by the students, this project also suggests the possibility, that I will go back to explore in the next chapter in relation to the three projects analysed in this work, of reading these classes as a site of citizenship rather than integration, i.e. of disruption and contestation

of the very logics that understand migrants as in obligation to either integrate (being included) or stay at the margin (staying outsiders), through their enactment of the right to be there and speak. Analysing language classes as sites of integration is obviously important, as it unveils how they work as sites of reproduction of citizenship as membership and habitus. However, as the example of English for Action suggests, and as x:talk, ASP and Worldword will show, language classes are not to be read as necessarily about inclusion/exclusion. They can also foster dialogue amongst undesired, unlikely subjects, who may, through language, engage in enacting citizenship by acting as citizens, making of these language classes sites of citizenship as enactment.

Indeed, an approach to citizenship and political subjectivity which emphasises transformation and challenges the logics of exclusion, pushes for looking precisely at resistance and at the possibility of enactment of citizenship through language by unexpected actors, such as non-status migrants. In the coming sections I will expand on the notion of citizenship as enactment while relating it with language and its power, to see how the two together can take to an understanding of political agency through language and dialogue from the margins.

Defining acts

In two of his most recent works, “Citizens without Frontiers” (Isin, 2012) and “Enacting European Citizenship” (Isin & Saward, 2013), Isin deepens further his understanding of acts and enactment in relation to performativity, disruption, political subjectivity, rights claims and justice. Isin's theoretical work speaks to language politics and agency and vice versa whilst going through its nodal points of clarification.

To analyse the act is to theorise agency, freedom from determinism and thus the capacity to bring about the new and the unexpected without being authorised to do so.

To act means to do something with a meaning, with a purpose, something that is received and interpreted as an innovation, a cut with the given that breaks off from habitus. But what makes an act such? People are constantly involved in actions. However, not all actions are acts. Going to a demonstration against austerity plans and cuts and thereby taking parts in property damaging attacks against a big, high class multinational shopping centre³⁹ is for example undoubtedly an action, and it stays so until the content, the meaning of this demonstration and its clashes are read as an act. Now, the very same demonstration can be read as a mere act of vandalism or violence or as an act of protest, a speech act, independent of the intention of the demonstrators. Indeed, readers of the act can either condemn the action as a violent and illegal act of defiance that precludes any constructive communication, or as an act of defiance that breaks from the given norms within which authorised political dialogue is permitted, and seeks to establish a different political dialogue, one in which the demonstrators are challenging and attempting to deny and transform, with violence, the fixed terms of law, capitalism and welfare set by the state. According to Isin “actions coalesce into an act only when they articulate a speech that demands to be heard and a political subjectivity that demands to be recognised” (Isin & Saward, 2013, p. 33). Such speech and demands need to be interpreted and read as such, and it is therefore in dialogue and in the very reading moment that an action becomes and functions as an act.

Isin refines his understanding of 'acts' by referring to Hannah Arendt's rooting of agency and of political being in our capacity to act, which for her means per se bringing something new into the world, beginning with oneself as the source of the act (Isin & Saward, 2013, p. 24). The capacity to act brings in human freedom: the possibility of creating something new that was not there before, and being the sole originator of it equals freedom from any determinism. Quoting Arendt: “to be free and to act are the

³⁹ I am thinking here of, for example, the anti-cuts demonstration of March 2011 in London, where amongst many other actions, the shopping giant Fortnum & Mason was occupied and the Ritz Hotel attacked with paint bombs and missiles (BBC News, 2011).

same” (Isin, 2012, p. 16). However, for Arendt as for Isin, this does not mean that the actor has control over the results of her action, or that she is free to act according to her intentions, but rather that, through the possibility to act, she can bring in the unexpected and unpredictable, which in turn can be received and read accordingly or not to her own goal.

Isin builds on and refers to Arendt for much of his theorising on acts, but also critiques her for grounding the freedom to act in the miracle of birth, as he much rather sees freedom as historically gained through the development and contestation of different accounts of justice (Isin, 2012, p. 118). Justice is also what differentiates ethical and social acts from political ones, as it is that what thrives and motivates to act politically to transform the law (Isin, 2012, p. 118). I will go back to both justice and answerability and to acts as descriptions in the section after next.

Another point in which Isin differentiates his own reading of acts from Arendt's is her failure to distinguish between actions and acts: she uses for both the same word, which in ancient Greek meant to govern and to begin (Isin & Saward, 2013, p. 24). Isin insists that in order to be able to analyse acts and their meaning, it is important to make a distinction between actions and acts, the former being better understood as bodily movements, and the latter as events engendering interpretations and descriptions (Isin & Saward, 2013, p. 26). Such interpretations and descriptions are what will determine what kind of act(s) are manifested in a specific event. In turn, a series of actions, or a happening, are not automatically an event. They become such when they are read as something new, relevant, that interpellates readers to describe them as an act. An act is then what it breaks with the given, brings in something new, and produces subjects, agents, out of which such act is generated (and hence their freedom enacted) but whose intentions do not correspond to the meaning of the act itself.

Even if not voluntaristic in their outcomes, acts are in sum what makes one into a subject. Therefore, if citizenship is to be about political engagement of (free) subjects of

rights, the act and the enactment of citizenship become fundamental to its analysis, and can tell more about its constitution and historical transformations than the limited concept of citizenship as membership, habitus and status. Isin suggests viewing citizenship as a relational institution instead of as a membership organisation, in which different subject positions relate, interact, reproduce, contest, challenge and transform, constituting themselves as political subjects through their enactment of citizenship (Isin & Saward, 2013). In this sense, the act is what is readable and analysable as such (i.e. as disruptive), whilst the whole dialogical process of acting and reading the act and the resulting political subjectivity or political becoming is what Isin calls enactment.

Understanding citizenship as relational and enacted, and theorising the dialogical moment between actors and readers as what determines an act suggest the centrality of communication, hence of language for becoming political.

In order to examine the linkages between language and enactment, before further enquiring in the mutual implications of Bakhtin, dialogism, acts and enactment, I will now look at the latter in relation to the speech act and the power of language in Bourdieu and Butler.

Enactment, performativity and language

So far, the theoretical direction taken has pointed towards an understanding of citizenship as political subjectivity and as enactment. If citizenship is about political participation, it has to concern political subjectivity, and if political subjectivity is constituted by and with the act, through the enactment of rights-claims, then citizenship itself is to be understood as enacted, or as enactment. Enactment is the process of production of the subject through her act, which gains its value as act from the interpretation of the reader. The reader, in turn does not have to be someone invested in a specific authority, it can be an academic as much as the media, as much as the actor

herself interpreting her own act.

The actor enacts citizenship when claiming her “right to claim rights” (Isin & Saward, 2013, p. 25). She enacts citizenship when acting as citizen without holding the status, and when a reader will recognise her act as a disruptive act of citizenship. As seen in the previous sections and as it has been historically predominantly the case, if such acts (and actors) of citizenship are not read or recognised as such, those very logics of exclusion are reproduced which limit political agency and subjectivity to a quality of the authorised, dominant classes (in first instance the holders of citizenship status, and then in a hierarchical scale of authorisation to power), and the arbitrariness of such logics remains concealed.

At this point, thinking back with Isin to the previous chapter of this thesis on performativity and the power of language, parallels and differences between enactment, speech act and political subjectivity become apparent. An act of citizenship (conscious or not) always involves claims, revindications, the presence of a speaker come subject through its speech act. A speech act is performed through language and it is precisely within its performative power that authors like Austin (Austin, 1975) and Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1991) have located political subjectivity, in order to avoid “subjectivist or objectivist accounts of social action” (Isin, 2012, p. 120).

While Isin says that a person becomes a subject through her act, and the reception of the act, Austin sees the success of a performative utterance (a speech act and its power to do what it says) in the force of speech itself. For Isin, the success of an act depends on its reception or interpretation and on its production of new subjects, not on language itself. For Bourdieu as for Isin, the power of language does not reside in language itself, or in Isin's terms in the action. For Bourdieu however, it lies in the authority of the speakers, in their recognition as authorised to speak. Language is for Bourdieu a manifestation of authority. Bourdieu's position there obviously collides with Isin's – as it seems rather supportive of the logics of exclusion according to which only those authorised to speak

(i.e. insiders, citizens) have political agency, while those who are excluded are destined to be so until they gain inclusion (at the expenses of other excluded Isin would argue). Indeed, with a move that arguably takes him close to Butler, Isin points at how Bourdieu did not conceive of the success of speech acts as depending exactly on the inadequacy of the actor or speaker, which beyond novelty, unexpectedness and surprise, can lead to ruptures and transformations (Isin, 2012, p. 122). What is at stake is theorising political subjectivity as the capacity to act creatively, inventively and autonomously (Isin, 2012, p. 123). In order to do so, turning to Derrida and Butler, Isin looks at performativity as iteration, repetition, and citation, and, with Butler, he locates the act in the moment of excess and failure of iterability, but more specifically, in the moment of rupture that the act comes to signify. It is exactly the possibility of disruption that is the foundation of politics: it is a rupture from the given, from the existing parameters and norms, that can generate transformation and is what makes the subject possible as political actor (Isin, 2012, p. 125).

Judith Butler equally roots agency, freedom from determinism and political subjectivity in the ruptures with the given, but more precisely in the hiccups, the stalls and failures that necessarily come with the iteration, repetition and reproduction of domination through language. For Butler it is through performativity, through the possibility of resignification through repetition that change is possible (though never calculable or predictable). Isin instead does not call this moment of rupture performativity, but enactment. Performativity, according to Isin, is to indicate repetition, iteration and citations, whilst enactment is the moment of disruption of these through acts of citizenship (Isin, 2012, p. 126). This difference in terminology is crucial to understand the theoretical specificity of acts of citizenship and of Butler's performativity. It is also crucial for the aim of this research, that is, to enquire into political change through language from the margins beyond binary conceptions of politics as inclusive or exclusive or oppressive or transformative.

In this sense, it is important to note that Isin's understanding of the act as rupture with the given is not meant to reproduce a dichotomy between dominant order as it is and the act that goes against it and disrupts it. Through enactment, i.e. the unpredictable interaction between an actor, the act and the reader, the given order *can* be transformed. Enactment is the whole process through which disruption can be detected and generated by reading an act as generating political subjectivity. The act of citizenship, that is, the transformative and disruptive in enactment is such when it is read as undermining the very dualistic conception of arbitrary exclusions by being enacted by the supposedly excluded. However politically crucial for transformation the act is not *inherently* transformative, as the same action that one would read as an act of citizenship could remain an unread action, as well as be read as an act of integration by someone else in another moment of time. Importantly though, an act depends on the agency of the actor as much as on that of the reader (which can be anyone) and it becomes transformative only through this interactive moment.

For Butler, change is not dependent on the relational moment between speaker, word spoken and listener, but rather on the moment in which the tape of dominant historical iteration which is reproduced through language jams. Such moment is clearly unpredictable. For Isin, transformation is precisely taking place in such relational moment between an action taking place, its reception as an act of citizenship by a reader, and the creation of a new political subject of rights through the act. For Butler, it is possible to resignify and reappropriate language against its original meaning because of its iterability and performativity. For example, it is possible to turn an originally offensive term like 'queer' into a political tool for radical sexual politics, albeit only through and within the terms set by language itself, i.e. it is not possible to decide to do it and succeed just through such intention. While this would be equally impossible for Isin, he would not put an emphasis on language's failures in repetition, but on the moment in which language is spoken, and what it produces: the subject.

Now, while the Isinian handling person needs a dialogical moment of recognition of her act to gain a subject position, the act will still be read as originating from the subject. Moreover, insisting on the centrality of the assumed illegitimacy of such subject (her claiming rights without having the authority to do so), Isin allows for the dimension of political agency from the margins to be at the core of political subjectivity, rather than relegated to the logics of exclusion (Bourdieu) or depending on language and its iterability (Butler).

Both Isin and Butler see political change in rupture, but while for Butler rupture is dependent on language's power and iterability, for Isin it depends on the epistemological, yet interactive (dialogical) moment between speaker/actor and reader/interlocutor (and also actor). Even though the dimension of dialogue and language is not explicitly dealt with in Isin's work, I would argue that enactment itself is fundamentally related to the moment in which the subject gains her freedom from the constraints of language as domination. By the act of claiming rights (through language) and by the interpretation of this act as such (dialogue) a person becomes a political subject, and through this, she constitutes herself as an actor of citizenship. One crucial advantage of understanding the epistemological act of reading as dialogic is that it puts emphasis on the reader as an interlocutor, as interacting, in dialogue with the actor, who therefore retains her agency and is not reduced to be called into being by the reader. Most importantly indeed, the reader is potentially anyone, and her act of reading is in turn an utterance that can generate unpredictable outcomes.

The subject, collective politics and justice

The theoretical path followed by Isin towards explaining political subjectivity is very close to the one I approached in the previous chapter. The central issue is in both cases

agency, freedom, and an inquiry into the possibility of change through politics (enactment) and through language (dialogue). In this sense, as I previously pointed out, Butler provided an important move by indicating how the repetition of the given can fail and give way to resignification. However, it would be limiting to relegate politics to resignification, both in terms of thinking through collective politics and in terms of underestimating the influence of the social field.

Isin's focus on politics as enactment and on rupture, manages to avoid an over-pervasiveness of language as domination by rooting agency in the act as rupture, in the possibility of creating something new, originating from the subject though not determined by it, that can change the very terms set by language, law and convention (Isin, 2012, p. 127).

Because the act depends on the interactive process of enactment, which includes its interpretation, it is never independent from the context it emerges from. An action can be read as an act or not, and if it is, this does not depend on the chances of failure of language, but on the subjects involved in both acting and interpreting. These subjects in turn cannot be thought of as isolated from their historical-political contexts, which may give the conditions for the actor to articulate and for the reader to interpret, though they do not determine its result (which is still open because of the unpredictability of the interpretation, that is, of dialogue).

For instance, x:talk, ASP and Worldword can only be read as enacting citizenship (as I will do in Chapter 6) because of the context they are in. These classes gain their disruptive character because of the political order that seeks to manage citizenship as membership and to exclude and criminalise non-status migrants, sex workers and street-sellers; because of language policies that seek to further divide and filter migrants; because of the restrictive access to official language classes; and because of these classes' curricula aimed at integration and reproduction of social order. Only because of the excluding context, these projects can be read as fostering the enactment of political

subjectivity by new actors of citizenship who do engage in learning the language and do mobilise and claim their rights through it. On the other hand, the context does not determine the result of such a reading, which remains dependant on the interaction between actor and reader, interaction which is free from the need to be authorised to allow for transformation.

Moreover, the action gains a political meaning not only when read as an act but also from the (individual or collective) purposiveness of the actors, which is dependent on the context within which subjects get to act and fight.

Collective politics is also made sense of by Isin through the concepts of purposiveness and intentionality (Isin, 2012, p. 129). Intentionality is present whenever someone consciously engages in an action in order to achieve a specific result. But the meaning and effect of the action, and most importantly its becoming an act, do not depend on the intentionality of the actor. An act can take place and be read as such even when the intention of the engendering subject was totally different to the resulting effect, or even unconscious or absent. There is not always a reason behind an action. It is the job of the investigator to account for an act, not of the actor to explain it according to its 'real purpose'.

What is mostly present in political actions is purposiveness. Someone involved in an action has normally a purpose, which does not mean they intend to achieve what the action is going to result into, but it means that the person can sense the *possibility* of taking up a subject position, that is, of making political change (Isin, 2012, p. 129). Purposiveness is also what characterises actions and acts enacted by collectivities, and although it does not extinguish what to interpret and the signification of an act, it does allow for making sense of collective politics with shared purposes. While it is impossible to know the results of actions, sharing purposes and possibly the sense of what subject positions may be brought about makes political mobilisation worthwhile and understandable. To say that the outcomes are open, but that collective political work

is purposive and that it is ontologically possible for subjects to break through the given dominant order leaves space to freedom and agency without fixing the terms of their existence.

The impossibility of knowing in advance what an action will bring about or if it will turn into an act, and the impossibility of intentionally engaging in an act have another implication. The subject, once she becomes such, does not have to hold herself responsible for her action. However, she still is answerable to it. The actor, as subject, acts by following what Arendt would have called the “principle of action” (Isin, 2012, p. 117) and what Isin, with Rancière, refers to as “answerability to the principle of enactment” (Isin, 2012, p. 130). Whilst actors can disregard their responsibilities when acting, they are still answerable to their action, i.e. they would still have their own description and reason to do it, which is following a fundamental principle: justice (Isin, 2012, pp. 127-130). When subjects act, they not only have a (more or less specific) purpose, but also a principle by which they act, a principle which they are answerable to. When one finds acting political subjects, it is mostly a sense of justice that drives their act, and it is because this sense shifts, develops and varies that historical, political change takes place, and the law can be changed. Rooting the possibility of transformation in answerable, purposive acts led by justice shifts further the focus from the failure of iteration to the subject towards the variation of what is conceived as just, opening up the chance for unexpected actors to generate change. This does not mean that this change happens outside of language or of convention, it rather indicates that these can unexpectedly be changed and ruptured.

Isin's move to ground citizenship in political subjectivity and enactment allows thinking of collectivity as shared purposiveness and shared answerability. If it is justice that pushes the act to take place, then actors can be easily thought of in form of a collectivity that shares principles, purposes and acts.

Hence, the context in which acts are generated is made here relevant in two ways. First,

it informs the possibility for the readers to read an act as transformative, while still leaving this possibility open to change because of the unpredictability of the reading act. Second, it informs the purposiveness of the actors involved through influencing their sense of justice (which is a reaction of the context seen as unjust), without fixing the outcome of their action, but allowing to appreciate the sense of collective political organising.

Thinking of citizenship as political subjectivity and as enactment does not simply account for the possibility of collective politics from the margins. It rather fully shifts the whole dualistic discourse of margin/centre, exclusion/inclusion by making ruptures and acts outside of the habitus of citizenship the very makers of it. Following Isin, not only migrants can together develop a multiple language of rights and mobilisation, but by doing so and by raising claims to justice and to the right to have rights they become actors of citizenship (paradoxically when governments and their anti-migrants legislations are dedicated to exclude them from citizenship as status). The latter is a major and fundamental step for any political work that is concerned with the injustice of the existing hierarchies amongst people living, working and acting on the mere basis of citizenship status. It gives the tools to argue how marginalised subjects are actually crucial to political unfolding. Moreover, the fact that their claims to rights are based on principles of justice shows how marginalised subjects are central to the enactment and transformation of citizenship.

Language as a site of citizenship

As mentioned above, locating freedom and political subjectivity in enactment is by no means to be understood as setting the intentions of the actor as what determines the

reading, the result and success of an act. It is however important to return to this point for enquiring further in the connections between language and enactment, and in order to further inquiry into when an act can be read as such.

First, thinking of politics as enacted through acts with unpredictable outcomes set against the conventions and repetitions of law and habitus links up with thinking of language as multiple and in the making through dialogue, which holds equally unexpected outcomes whilst it is also situated in historically and hierarchically ordered iterations. It makes sense: one cannot act fully intentionally as a political subject through language, but because of the possibility to speak, engage in dialogue and act one can be constituted as political subject through enactment.

And what exactly characterises an act? Isin would answer: purposiveness, novelty, rupture, and their interpretation as such. And what allows for interpretation, novelty and rupture in language? Bakhtin would answer: dialogue, and heteroglossia. I refer to Bakhtin here because it seems to be doing interesting work for expanding on the collective, interactive, communicative and hence linguistic and dialogic aspect of politics as enactment. At the same time, Isin's concepts of citizenship as enactment, purposiveness and principle of justice also add crucial political and collective content to Bakhtin's theory of language. I explain: for Bakhtin language entails the possibility of contesting meaning, struggling upon them, creating new ones, thus engendering change and novelty. Change through and within language makes sense if language is seen as dialogical, i.e. if it is about communication amongst more than one speaker. The unexpected result of communication and the unpredictable response of the interlocutor(s) determine a new meaning, a new and possibly transformative outcome. Change through and within language is also utterly necessary, as language is what allows the reproduction of social relations as they are, through disciplinary forces or mechanisms that aim at making language unitary and thus excluding the possibility of dialogue and multilingualism (Bakhtine & Volochinov, 1977). Bakhtin's

monolingualism has clear parallels with the exclusionary logics that make the authorised subject the only one who is able to speak and be political. It is through arguing how language is inherently multiple and dialogical that Bakhtin theorises the possibility of change through language.

Read closer together with Bakhtin's linguistic terminology, Isin's enactment can be seen as happening in the interaction, in the dialogue between what will be constituted as actors and the public, amongst different speakers that have the opportunity, through language and interaction, to say or generate something new and in that moment to become political subject. In other words, when Isin says that it is the act that precedes and constitutes the subject, one could add, with Bakhtin, that dialogue and language are what precede the act and make it legible as such. In this sense, the constitutive moment of both act and political subjectivity would be located in language – not in language as sign structure, but in language as that communicative interaction and the very possibility of interpreting what makes modalities of action legible as act, including those that are not articulated through language, as for instance unintentional bodily movements or gestures. In this sense, language becomes central to politics, making a valuable argument for the necessity of dialogue, communication, language learning and sharing, rather than for an understanding of language as the quintessence of repetition, iteration, convention and domination. One fundamental link between language and enactment is that for an action to become an act, as much as for a happening to become an event, these need to be read, recognised, interpreted as such. Which means that there needs to be a public interpreting and describing it (Isin, 2012, pp. 132-135). But, (unless one views meaning as exhausted in authorship and the public as 'tabula rasa' upon which meaning is to be written) what is a public if not an interlocutor?

Isin refers to description and interpretation as fundamental to defining an act. As above, both of these happen through language and dialogue. It is through dialogue that new, unexpected outcomes can be generated. When we act, as much as every time we talk,

we cannot know what our interlocutor is going to respond, although we have a purpose in saying what we are saying and in acting as we are. Following this reasoning, language becomes a fundamental site for the enactment of citizenship not only because of being the terrain on which national belonging, hierarchies of correctness and socio-economic positioning are played out (see Chapter 1), but also because of the possibility of engendering rupture and transformations through dialogue.

Enacting the right to have rights can be indeed understood as that moment of rupture in which citizenship is enacted through the articulation of such right by new subjects come into being through that very new language of rights that gathers its meaning in communication, i.e. in the moment in which it is communicated and interpreted as such. In this sense, the work of analysing and interpreting alternative language classes and the possible acts arising from them, can (and in the next chapter, it will) function exactly along the lines of looking at how the learning of the (porous and heteroglossic) official language by subjects who are sought to be excluded from the official political discourse and arena, can lead to the articulation, through new languages of rights and of transformation, of these very subjects' political subjectivity, i.e. to the enactment of citizenship from the margins. This will mean inscribing the very set up of these classes within the framework of citizenship as enactment, whilst defying dualistic views of inclusion/exclusion, analysing the possibility of enactment and transformation of citizenship through language even within so called official classes. For example, read through enactment as dialogical, x:talk, ASP and Worldword show how language classes as political sites that push for dialogue amongst and with marginalised subjects can be read as leading to acting, to speaking out and to claiming rights (which then can be read as act of citizenship). Whilst they should not be read as templates of how a transformative class, or politics has to be, their example brings together the politicality of enactment as transformation of citizenship (through having non-citizens acting as such by being in a language class), and the centrality of dialogue and language to such

politicality, by being centred on fostering dialogue, exchange and multiple languages.

These projects show as well how language itself becomes a site of politics, and though power and hierarchies of difference influence whose voice is more likely to be heard or seen as coming from a subject, the possibility of engendering change, as opposed to the dominant politics of reproduction of domination, lies precisely in the nature of language as dialogical and multiple (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981), and in the possibility for outsiders to act as subjects, and thus to transform citizenship (Isin & Nielsen, 2008).

The role of language as dialogue is fundamental for politics, as it is within the articulation of one's thoughts, beliefs, and claims that new subjects come to act and become political. And, while language can be a prison in its constructed monoglossia, as much as citizenship can function as exclusionary, it is however not necessarily so. Language is made of communication and one can and will read and recognise new subjects claiming their rights to have rights.

This demonstrates that there is no such thing as an ontological exclusion of the oppressed or outsider from the realm of politics, nor there is a pervasive and inescapable domination in language. Importantly, this is not an argument downplaying domination, or for an understanding of it as intentionally and easily challenged. What it does mean is that such challenge is possible and language, as communication and intelligibility, is fundamental to it.

There are two necessary questions stemming from this. Who are the interlocutors, those who through their reading and interpreting will inscribe the act onto the action? And is the interpretation what will automatically confer validity to the rights-claim? One should obviously not say that the reading has to come from the authority itself, otherwise one would fall straight back into the inclusion/exclusion dualism and see entrance into the political realm as indeed inclusion into the dominant, or authorised status. Transformative politics is about a politics which is a matter of challenging,

destabilising power, not of asking for permission to gain inclusion in it. In this sense, to say that subjects will be read as actors and acts will be read as such regardless of the readers' position in the power hierarchy, equals to saying that change in language has taken place, and that outsiders are not chained to their exclusion by the dominant social order, but they are intrinsic and constituent part of the political moves (citizenship) that seek to preserve the position of those in power, which in turn are bound to encounter resistance and struggle.

Wherever there are domination and a logic of inclusion/exclusion contributing to essentialise it, there will be resistance and defiance by subjects who, by acting their rights to have rights through the possibility of dialogue given by heteroglossic language, and through a principle of justice, will unveil the arbitrariness of domination and the unsustainability of thinking in terms of exclusion. The results of these transformations are of course open and they can also (and often did in history) reproduce domination and exclusion. What is crucial in this analysis of enactment and language politics is that such transformations are possible, that they take place interactively, and they manifest themselves in the capacity to act, collectively as well as individually.

Reading acts of citizenship in its connection to language highlights the communicative, interactive aspect of politics and adds the importance of language as a site in which citizenship is enacted and transformed. It allows analysing language policies and language classes starting not only from the embeddedness of language in politics, but also seeing language as central to and enabling transformative politics and disruption in the first place.

For this purpose, the new meanings that can be created according to the Bakhtinian framework through language and dialogue definitely benefit from Isin's emphasis on enactment, justice and purposiveness. Saying that dialogue, communication and contestation over meanings may generate new meaning, or to say it with Isin, new

political subjectivities and enactments, could still prove too vague and in need of a purpose in order to explain, account and describe why and how speakers engage in it, i.e. engage in a communication that is likely to result in politics. Understanding the presence of purposiveness and of a principle of justice in acts of citizenship does not mean that all communication which is felt as driven by a sense of justice will turn into political acts, or that unconscious actions cannot turn to be politically crucial acts (history is full of them), it rather indicates that to most acts that will be read as such there is a purpose to be ascribed to, i.e. justice, and through this purpose one can imagine and theorise politics, attempts to act politically and successful political enactments.

Moreover, stressing how enactment happens as a challenge to the logics of exclusion through and by marginalised subjects adds a crucial aspect to the lack of further engagement with positionality detected in Bakhtin's dialogism. Combining enactments and dialogism, not only is change from the margin possible because of the unpredictability of dialogue, but transformative change itself becomes such because of the marginalised positionality of the actors involved claiming right to have rights. However, this is not to be understood as restricting transformative politics to the marginalised. Depending on whether their utterances will be received and interpreted as such, anyone can engage in acts that show the arbitrariness of the paradigm of exclusion, through communication (in all possible ways⁴⁰) as well as through reading the 'excluded' as being an actor, not 'worthy of inclusion' but already necessary part of the political.

In sum, citizenship as enactment is very helpful to theorise politics through language, while language as dialogue deepens the communicative aspect of enactment, indicating how language itself is central to any act of citizenship.

⁴⁰ This can include organising a language class, demonstrating or doing arts as much as writing a thesis.

Whenever acts of citizenship are taking place and political subjectivity is constituted, through a dialogical moment language allows for communication (even if it does not determine its content) and the transformation of meaning and of citizenship itself.

What is being created through new rights-claims are not only new subjects of rights, but also new languages through which these will be read and understood as such. In this respect, if acts of citizenship are to be analysed in relation to the enactment of new subjects of rights, to the rupture from the given and the transformation that they may set forth, it is also possible to analyse what new meaning and what new languages are brought about through enactment as dialogue. For the sake of such analysis, language can be itself read as a site of citizenship, a site where citizenship is transformed from, where new subjects, through speech acts, create and are created by (in the dialogical process of acts being enacted and interpreted) new languages of rights. I am arguing here that language is fundamental for the constitution and interpretation of acts of citizenship, and at the same time it can be thought of as a site, for in this way it can be specifically analysed as the setting from where citizenship is enacted. In this respect, the language taught in official language classes can be seen as a site of citizenship as habitus where the reproduction of dominant practices and of citizenship as exclusionary takes place. But, in the very same setting, language can also be a site of citizenship as enactment, as because of its dialogical and unpredictable nature, a new language can be born through and with a new subject that may be able to claim her rights, be intelligible as such and engage in transforming citizenship. The student of the official language class may for instance start a communication with other students that could lead to the realisation of a common purpose or principle of justice and lead to organising into an action of rights-claims, which may result in factors and acts of citizenship.

In other words, language allows for enactment and enactment through language transforms citizenship and the terms of dominant social order through transforming language. Not only language is an instrument of control through which citizenship as

exclusionary is sought to be kept, but it is also the condition for its transformation.

Language, transformation and acts of citizenship

The aim of this chapter has been to develop an outspokenly political dimension and framework to analyse language; to account for the possibility of transformation and rupture within such political dimension; to deepen an understanding of language in relation to citizenship; to re-read citizenship in light of the centrality of language; and to shift politics from the margins onto the centre, ultimately challenging dichotomies of exclusion/inclusion.

Isin's theory of citizenship as enacted has made it possible to reframe how to go about a research that looks at the centrality of language for mechanisms of citizenship management and control. Allowing for a view on citizenship and of politics as enacted rather than as status or habitus, Isin has provided a new framework with which to analyse resistance to language policies through arguing against the very logics of exclusion itself. Indeed, through language policies and official language classes language definitely works as an exclusionary site of reproduction of domination. However, showing how language is also multiply produced, shared and learnt amongst the subjects these policies seek to exclude, demonstrates how citizenship is enacted from the margins through it, challenging the very logics of exclusion.

On the other hand, revisiting theories of speech act, language and agency has led me to integrate Bakhtin's dialogism and heteroglossia into theories of enactment, transformation and disruption, arguing for the possibility of creating new meaning through the open and multiple character of communication through language. Connectedly, inscribing the centrality of language itself into the very understanding of how acts of citizenship come into being and are read as such has shown how language

and transformation are necessarily bound together. Saying that language becomes central to the coming into being of acts of citizenship went further to conclude that language itself can be analysed a site of citizenship. Language as site of citizenship will be now key for an analysis of the role of language in the political becoming and mobilisation of migrants through alternative language classes, as much as for its possibility within official ones.

For the crucial stake of determining how dialogical and language exchanges and usages become strictly political and why, Isin's understanding of politics as enactment, and of justice and purposiveness helps individuate a common driving force that pushes people to become political and to seek to change the terms set by norms and laws, whilst not reducing the interpretation of acts to the intentions of the actors.

With this vocabulary at hand, and the drawn parallels and integrations between theories of enactment and of language and agency, I turn to look more in detail at the work of the three language teaching projects in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 | Language Classes as Acts of Citizenship

Language classes as sites of citizenship

National language knowledge, as I have tackled throughout this work, is seen and managed by many EU governments as fundamental for the integration of (certain, desirable) migrants in society, for the maintenance of social order and for their admission into formal citizenship. Following the dominant understanding of citizenship as membership, habitus and status, acquiring national language knowledge corresponds to accessing rights, to being included in the reproductive, active, 'good' citizenship. While the acquisition, reproduction and testing of national language can be seen as central device for citizenship as membership, the possibility of disrupting and transforming citizenship from the margins could provide further insights into an argument that looks at how rights and political change can happen and be brought about by unexpected, 'unauthorised' subjects through acts of citizenship and through language as dialogue.

At the core of Chapter 4 was the question about the possibility of agency and transformation within the constrictions of language. In the previous chapter, I explored how Isin's theorisation of enactment as political subjectivity intersects with, learns from and integrates an understanding of language as dialogue as fundamental to politics. Citizenship has indeed resulted as not only a tool for governing subjects or for the confirmation of the political as exclusive realm of the (authorised) citizen-subject, but

also as the theatre for the enactment of new political subjects. Hence, I intend to adopt here a framework where citizenship is understood as (new and unexpected) political subjectivity; political subjectivity is constituted through enactment (i.e. through acts of citizenship); the success of such enactment is determined by its rupturing with the given; acts are driven by answerability and its actors are driven by purposiveness following the principle of justice; and both the very possibility for the event to take place and for it to be interpreted and described as enactment are rooted in dialogue, communication and interaction between interlocutors. It is because of its dialogical character that language does not only represent a site for the reproduction of citizenship as membership, but also a site of citizenship as enactment, i.e. of citizenship as transformable and challenged by marginalised subject claiming their rights.

For dialogue to take place – which is what makes the change of meaning possible as well as the expression and interpretation of new meaning through rights-claims, disruption and transformation – language, understood as communication is central. When new subjects of rights transform citizenship through disrupting acts of rights-claims, they mostly do so articulating these through language.

Even if the language used stems from the official, dominant language, in the dialogical moment of its expression and reception, new, disruptive meanings and acts may and do take place. For instance, when a working group of sex workers within the 280 participants to the 2005 Brussels 'Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration' (Sorfleet, 2007) wrote the 'Declaration on the rights of sex workers in Europe' (ICRSE, 2005a) and a Manifesto (ICRSE, 2005b) to go with it, and presented them at the European Parliament in Bruxelles, an apparently official language (amongst others the language of human rights law) was used. However, the rights that were claimed through this language, including the right to free movement for all sex workers (also non-EU ones), represented a disruptive act that challenged European citizenship and its restrictions within the core of its governing institution (Andrijasevic, Aradau,

Huysmans, & Squire, 2012)⁴¹. In other words, the language that enabled the writing of these documents was taken from official, even at certain stages specialised language and human rights lawyers were also involved in helping writing the draft (Andrijasevic, Aradau, Huysmans, & Squire, 2012, p. 502). This language resulted in disruptive rights-claims that showed the presence and struggle of marginalised subjects, constituting them as actors of citizenship. The Declaration and the Manifesto were translated and circulated in many national languages and reached activists throughout Europe and beyond, and one can argue that their language, metaphorically speaking, acquired and became the language of rights of criminalised but yet acting subjects, rather than the official language of citizenship. All this happened in moments of dialogue: of collective writing, of presentation and of reading and interpretation of these documents. Language, even if apparently official, allowed this act of citizenship by sex workers to take place. It is exactly the possibility of change and disruption that language offers through collective and receptive dialogical political work that makes it a site of (transformative) citizenship.

Saying that language in its metaphorical sense is a site of citizenship leads to understanding language classes as also, potentially, a site of citizenship. Language classes for migrants have been the empirical core of this work, starting from their embeddedness in a process of filtering and maintenance of social order and citizenship as membership (official language classes), through to the existence of alternative, grassroots classes and the possibility of political becoming and agency through language.

Whilst it is obvious that official language classes are a site of citizenship in which its

⁴¹ "In October 2005, 200 delegates from twenty-eight countries in Europe gathered in Brussels to take part in an event for sex workers' rights, which involved a three-day conference, the presentation of a Declaration on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe in the European Parliament, the drafting of a Manifesto, recommendations for policy makers, a party, and a demonstration. The sex workers' mobilisation appears, at first sight, to be an exemplary form of active citizenship. Nevertheless, despite engaging European institutions, being active participants, and making use of the language of rights, we argue that the sex workers' mobilisation challenges the conception of active European Union (EU) citizenship" (Andrijasevic, Aradau, Huysmans, & Squire, 2012, p. 497).

management as status and habitus gets reproduced together with the dominant figure of the desirable, good migrant/citizen, the question arises as to whether they could also, potentially, be a site of citizenship as enactment or transformation. This question can be answered by looking back at Bakhtin's understanding of language as multiple and dialogical and at the conclusions taken regarding language and the political. Language, because of its dialogical aspect and despite forces that push for dominant monolingualism, is multiple.

Within one political context, as it is the one of the nation, language is multiple in terms of its polyglossia, that is, the existence of more than one language. This is not only to mean the official language, the differently classed slangs and dialects within the national one, and the, also internally diverse, migrants' first languages. Also, language is poliglossic as it can be analysed as, for instance, the language related to specific industries and jobs, the language of rights claims, the language of disruption, or the language of reproduction. It is important to be able to name this multiplicity to argue for the ample scope of language and to identify analyse each expression of its diversity. Moreover, in order not to fall again into dualistic analyses of intrinsically either oppressive or transformative languages, the internal diversity of each language (heteroglossia) is also a crucial analytical move. Indeed, within what may be recognised as the language of a specific group or with a predominant purpose, there will always be internal differences or instabilities, given that language re-creates its meaning in dialogue. Within one language readable as 'the language of mobility rights' spoken in one alternative class of ASP for instance, the wording 'freedom of movement' could work as hurtful and action-inhibiting, reminding of unfortunate travels, of family left behind who cannot travel, and of their condition of deportability (De Genova, 2002), as much as it can instigate the wish to cry out for and claim the right to move.

Although the language taught in official language classes should definitely be distinguished, analytically, from the language taught in what I have been calling

alternative language classes, it should not be counterposed to it in dualistic or exclusive terms. Non clear-cut effects could as well be generated within the official language taught in a so-called official class, by the very virtue of the impossibility to predict what people will do with language (Bryers, 2013). Official language is also internally multiple and therefore it may enable at times the production of transformative changes of meaning and even of enactment of citizenship, as we saw above in the case of the 2005 sex workers' Declaration. In this sense, teaching a language about the criminalisation of migration in an official ESOL class could even lead to gaining knowledge to avoid getting busted by police instead of only reproducing and reaffirming the order of illegality.

Moreover, one cannot exclude that migrants attending official classes may, through the possibilities of communication increased by the language taught, engage in dialogues that lead to disruptive rights-claims, or that even in these classes, like the example of Worldword shows, the language learnt and taught itself would possibly take on very different paths from the parameters and templates set by the state. Teaching official language is thus not a straightforward and fixed practice of reproduction, and it may offer the possibility for open ended outcomes, contrarily to what a monolingistic and dualistic notion of dominant and alternative languages suggest (Bourdieu, 1991).

In other words, if one reads official language classes in light of citizenship as enactment, they could be seen as sites of citizenship which aim at the reproduction of integration and of social order, but within which the possibility of new interaction and communication can bring about unexpected political beings and transformations.

At this point, I am concerned with the possible stance to be taken as regards to official language classes. Saying that they are sites of citizenship which can potentially allow for disruption despite their normative and reproductive purposes suggests that it is important to analyse the role and potential of these classes in their own specificity. The most obvious reason for this is that these classes are neither accessible nor meant for

undesirable, undocumented migrants, and one could argue that they are exclusionary. In the next section, I will consider whether the restricted access to these classes, coupled with their potential usefulness for the emergence of new political becomings and subjectivities is to be translated in a demand for inclusion.

After exploring the viability of reading official language classes as possible sites of citizenship, I will go on to further destabilise and challenge the exclusionary understanding of citizenship according to which language policies are successful instrument of exclusions. Indeed, I will embark on the analysis of the enactments and disruptions through language that take place from the margins through the work of Worldword, x:talk, and ASP. Through these projects I will show how the subjects missing from accounts of language tests and policies as exclusionary mechanisms are far from being excluded outsiders, but rather act as citizens disrupting the very logics of exclusion and transforming concepts of citizenship as mere membership. I will look at how actors come, through language as dialogue, to claim their rights to have rights, to work and live decriminalised, whilst challenging stigma, victimisation, isolation, silencing, and racism. Through these projects, transformation from the margins through language will be demonstrated, beyond mere exclusion through language tests and other dominant conceptions of language. However, the work of x:talk, ASP and Worldword will not prove as transformative per se. Rather, their marginality, fragility and dependance on the unpredictability of dialogue will be shown as the condition of their very possibility to engender political change.

Official language classes – a case for inclusion?

Official language classes in EU countries like Germany and the UK (in Spain there are to date no obligatory language tests or classes, though they were often proposed) are

linked to clear agendas of integration and management of migration. In Germany, they are obligatory for all migrants who want to reside and work in Germany permanently, or for those seeking naturalisation. In the UK, they are indirectly obligatory as they are available to prepare the students for passing the citizenship language test. Both in Germany and in the UK, these classes are clearly not designed for non-status migrants and they are taught together with so called 'citizenship material' (UK) or 'orientation courses', aimed at teaching about political and cultural life in the respective countries.

As argued in Chapter 1, official classes openly teach the language of reproduction and maintenance of the dominant culture and socio-political order, as their curricula and teaching materials are set by the state (Home Office et al., 2010a; Pietzuch, 2009). These classes have to comply with the templates, guidelines and materials set by the Home Office⁴². They are aimed at integrating desirable migrants, migrants who are not deportable, who are already on their way to legalisation. Official classes are at first sight quite clearly exclusionary, given that non-status migrants are not entitled to attend them, while those who may get in the classes are further filtered in their possibility to attend by their cultural and language capital, by their financial situation, work commitments, conjunctural factors, family commitments, and so on (see Chapter 3).

It is crucial to address critiques to official language classes, to point at how they are far from being the ultimate tool for social cohesion, but are embedded in the government's agenda and in the (re)production of the (good) citizen subject and (good or bad) migrant other. However, they also may provide a certain language knowledge, or communication skills, whose outcome would go beyond possible personal empowerment and finding a fitting place in the social order. Given that more types of dialogue take place, it is not to be excluded that through these classes transformative outcomes may emerge, from which new subjects will constitute themselves as such, and enact and transform citizenship even if paradoxically being taught to fit the scheme of

⁴² For a critique of these, see Chapter 2.

existing parameters. National, official language knowledge can be seen as possibly increasing or complexifying dialogical skills and opportunities, as any new directions communication takes is unpredictable. For many migrants it is difficult to access language classes or to learn the national language in other ways. And for the reasons just mentioned above there is probably little case for arguing for their abolition. Indeed, this is far from being the aim of this work, which is rather to enquire into the role of language, beyond strict dualisms, with a focus on the political, rather than on personal empowerment. Official classes are not in this respect the most evil manifestation of the oppression through language, rather even there, the possibility of transformation exists. This is not to deny that official classes still prove exclusionary. Given that the exclusion of undocumented migrants seems structural to the construction of the good active citizen and migrant, one may be tempted to argue for inclusion and condemn such exclusion. For the inclusion of those against whom norm and desirable political subjects are constructed would automatically bring to the restructuring of the latter. However, it is actually quite risky to argue for inclusion without challenging the very logic which constructs the excluded as such. It is this very binary logic of exclusion and inclusion that lies at the heart of citizenship as membership what needs to be contested. Language tests, the restriction of access to language classes, the lack of provision, and the language of integration are all means to reproduce citizenship as exclusionary, and they are therefore sites in which citizenship as membership gets reproduced. Because of the nature of language as created in dialogue and because of the importance of reading citizenship as enactment, I would argue that there is neither the need for making a case of inclusion in these classes, nor for condemning them. Simply arguing for inclusion would indeed reconfirm an idea of citizenship as membership and also the idea of language as neutral, i.e. hiding the work of official language and its contribution in the reproduction of social order. Condemning official language classes would risk hiding the fact that communication is fundamental and language, through dialogue, can always

bring about change. It would also reproduce a binary opposing alternative to official classes, which will be hard to maintain, as elements of transformation as well as of reproduction are at times hard to point out and are present in both.

This does obviously not mean that no analytical distinctions are to be considered. Rather, that everywhere there is the possibility of resistance and of transformation. Relating back to Isin's 'Being Political' (Isin, 2002), arguing for inclusion and condemning the exclusion of the constructed other from the political active realm actually serves fixing the excluded in her category as such, indirectly supporting the logics by which citizenship is constructed on membership, while it hides the actual political resistance and subjectivity of those excluded categories. By showing how exclusion does and can not fully work, its very logic is attacked, establishing how those categories that are constructed as at the margins are actually over time always slipping into the centre and challenging it.

In the case of official language classes, whilst obviously important to point at the difficulties and restrictions of access to highlight the exclusionary logic behind them, merely arguing for inclusion in them would reaffirm this logic, concealing the strategies and capacities of many undocumented migrants to actually learn the language otherwise, for instance through family, networks, at work, alone, through alternative classes, or even finding their way into official classes⁴³. Exclusion is not a viable or actually ever successful political strategy. It is indeed always porous, resistance and disruptions are always possible. This possibility will become the more apparent in the coming section on the German school Worldword.

In relation to subversive strategies it is also interesting to quote Dermot Bryers of English for Action, who, whilst attempting to change ESOL in the UK from within, providing state-regulations independent, though accredited, community action oriented

⁴³ In my experience with x:talk, two students had managed, despite their undocumented status, to enter official ESOL classes in London, through slippages in the system. As previously addressed in the thesis, during my research I have also encountered officially acknowledged schools, like Worldword, or semi-official ESOL providers like EfA, which have developed means of letting undocumented students take part in them.

classes and training to other schools, states:

I'm a big defender of publicly funded ESOL courses and believe that there's a lot of space to breath in the public sector. Teachers are observed once or twice a year, so essentially they can do whatever they like as long as the paperwork suggests that they are towing the line. Half of our 'Whose Integration' project was run at Tower Hamlets College. Hackney Adult Learning Service pay me to run trainings for their staff on participatory ESOL and Reflect. (...) Although the rhetoric from the top is powerful, on the ground there are a lot of good people doing exactly as they want. (Bryers, 2013)

Bryers' argument is clearly pro state-funded official classes. However, it is also clearly not an argument for inclusion. It is rather driven by his own experience and knowledge of the possibility for subversion within apparently water-tight exclusionary institutions. Again, this is not to conceal that exclusions do exist and that in this specific case accessing ways to learn the language is much harder for some than for others. The same Bryers complains that there is in the UK a much greater demand for English classes, even by state fund eligible migrants, whilst “for the estimated 500,000 undocumented migrants there is little hope of getting a good ESOL course” (Bryers, 2013).

The proposed turn beyond exclusion and inclusion aims at showing the arbitrariness of citizenship as membership, it does not hide existing hierarchies or how the exclusionary logic is presented as the crucial node for accessing politics and agency, it rather shows that it is not merely the exclusion itself which is unjust, but the very idea of thinking this exclusion as possible and necessary. To say it with Isin, what is to be challenged is the attempt to completely fix the excluded in their position of exclusion, i.e. to reconfirm the pre-existence of the categories of the excluded to the very mechanisms (citizenship as membership) that has constituted them in the first place (Isin, 2002, p. 3). What is being argued in this research is indeed that language is learnt, used, traversed,

and that it can and does allow for the enactment and transformation of citizenship from the margins, making these central. An important example, whose encounter supported the development of my arguments in regards to resistance from within, beyond the exclusion/inclusion binary and for the analysis of the possibility of reading official language classes as sites of transformative citizenship is the school Worldword in Germany. Its case, that of a state acknowledged language school, running Intergrationskurse and citizenship language tests, but with an obvious radical history and background in the squatters scene is rather specific and deserves focussed attention.

Official language classes as site of transformative citizenship – the case of Worldword

The challenge of inclusion and exclusion

In Germany migrants can be divided into those who are 'undesirable', therefore sought to be excluded from language classes more or less directly, those who are 'entitled' to attend them, and those who are 'required' to. The former are, unsurprisingly, undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and generally poorer migrants. 'Entitled' are instead those who have recently arrived and already got a minimum of one year residence permit. If there is enough place in the courses, also long term migrants and EU citizens living in Germany can get entitlement to the classes. 'Required' to attend the classes are all those migrants who, in the moment of presenting themselves at the immigration authorities for need or necessity (e.g. of residence or work, permit or spouse visa), are considered as not being able to make themselves understood easily in spoken German, and for those who are considered as in "particular need for

integration”⁴⁴ (zur Nieden, 2009, pp. 133, my translation).

All those non EU-citizens who want to acquire citizenship or prolongate their residence and work permits, have to prove their attendance to classes, and/or pass the language test. Once given the 'request' or 'entitlement' to take the integration course, one has to go with it to a recognised and authorised language school. It is then the school itself that will have to contact the authorities and enquire into whether the state will fund the student's course or not. At the point of enrolling into the course, the student will have to present her pass, residence permit, and, if in receipt of benefit, a proof of the latter. It is expected that the teachers check the students' passes regularly and that they notify the authorities in case they do not attend class. In case of failed attendance the students would have repercussions on their status (delayed renovation or need to pay for the course again by themselves) and the state would stop funding them, leaving the school to deal with lack of income (G., 2011).

As problematised in Chapter 3, Teachers and schools do not only have to comply with the curricula set by the migration authorities, or be subjected to controls and observations by officers with no background in language teaching, but they also are expected to function as an extension of the border authorities. After the change of administration of immigration affairs of 2005, language schools were confronted with either accepting these changes, and getting partial funding from the state for teaching migrants, or providing more expensive classes for mostly privileged migrants or students. The wish to teach to broader (and more 'real') audiences and the significant financial difference for both students and schools, brought most schools to decide to get authorised to offer integration courses (G., 2013).

This was the case also for the collectively run school Worldword, which has been one of the examples in this work of how language can be and is taught differently, opening up a broader understanding of language that goes beyond the official, national one.

⁴⁴ Being required to attend, as explained more thoroughly in Chapter 2, does not mean being desirable, as language classes can also function as filters.

The case of Worldword also presents a clear example of how official language classes can be sites of transformative citizenship. The Worldword language school started in West Germany in 1981, within a squatted complex in which people wanted to foster political exchange and set up a living space. The language school was established soon after squatting, in one building of the bigger complex, by “a group of foreigners (from Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Turkey...) and Germans, altogether around 15 people” (Worldword, 1981, my translation). Since the beginning, the school has had the aim to organise events and share information about internationally relevant issues. According to their first pamphlet of 1981, the (non German) language classes⁴⁵ would be “focussing on the every-day life and on the political and social struggles happening in the respective countries, as well as on the wishes of the students” (Worldword, 1981, my translation). The German classes would also “treat the situation of foreigners” and would entail “information and help to deal with every-day problems (for example information about unemployment, income support, foreigners and asylum laws etc.)” (Worldword, 1981, my translation).

Apart from having changed much of the terminology (the word 'foreigner' would not be used anymore, because of its offensive history), to date Worldword offers language courses in 12 different national languages⁴⁶ and tends to have former students of German as teachers of their native languages. Worldword remains a political project, anti-capitalist, anti-racist and openly positioned in this way. In the 'about section' of its website, Worldword is presented as:

a centre for languages, for political meetings and discussions, for cultural events and exhibitions and for parties and fun! [Worldword] is an open collective, where 10 or more languages are spoken. You should expect:

⁴⁵ I.e. at the early stage of the school: Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Turkish.

⁴⁶ I.e. German, English, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, French, Turkish, Hebrew, Russian, Kurdish (Worldword, 2013, my translation)

- No stylish institute, rather self-renovated and self-cleaned rooms, and a self-managed collective.
- No high-tech or psychologically advanced teaching methods, but teachers who would also want to hear about your experiences and interests
- No blah blah about democracy and culture, but party-taking for the speech- and powerless (Worldword, 2013, my translation)

Worldword is openly political in its approach to language teaching. Not only, as S., one of its longest term teachers told me, do the members of the collective initiate and organise political events, but also the students themselves eventually engage in such activities, like organising informative events on the revolt of migrant workers in Rosarno, Italy in 2010, or on Asylum, or the G8 (Interview with S., 2011). The overt political character and approach however, did not impede this school from being enlisted as provider of Integration and Orientation (the so called 'cultural' part of the classes) courses. Although this could raise some suspicions, it may actually be not that surprising. One of the dangers of the official, state approach to language teaching and testing is the fact that language is considered as a neutral tool, which makes its politically charged character and its embeddedness in dominant relations and hierarchies (to say it with Bourdieu its' doxic' element) the more invisible and justified (Bourdieu, 1991). In this sense, if the national language to be taught is seen as one neutral language, it would not matter too much where it is taught, as long as it is taught in the way it is prescribed.

Moreover, the teaching materials are predetermined by the immigration authorities and the classes are monitored, i.e. they are subjected to periodical controls by officials, which assist the classes and check the attendance list of the students. This happens in all schools, also those with no apparent political aspirations. It is very interesting to see how the case of Worldword represents one clear example of how the logic of exclusion,

taken for granted by governing authorities is actually porous and never completely tight and effective. In Worldword there are indeed parallel German classes to the Integrationskursen, and within each course, Integrationskurs or not, there is one or two extra free places available for undocumented migrants or asylum seekers or those who cannot afford the fee (P., 2013). In the Integrationskurse the attendance list of the students required to attend is always filled in at the end of the class (the students are then all written down as present, and if there was an official control, the attendance list could be filled in on the spot accordingly to the actual presence) (G., 2011; Mg., 2011). Students who are obliged to attend the course, are allowed to sign on later on even if they did not attend (P., 2013; R., 2013). In regards to the tests taking place within the school, a student I interviewed told me that students who risked losing their residence permit or their documents if failing the exam would be able to send someone else in their name to take their exam (R., 2013).

What this conveys is that even in what seem to be controlled and exclusionary mechanisms of migration control – like official language classes, subjects that are structurally excluded may find their way in. And this does not mean that they are included, but rather, that their position as excluded and excludable is not sustainable or effective.

The very fact that the official filters and restrictions to access are not working in Worldword, i.e. that those not expected or supposed to get in an official language school manage to do so, while others even get to pass the test without having to write it, together with its open political approach, make the potential of this project to become a site of transformative citizenship, rather than of reproduction of citizenship as membership.

Even if the teachers do use official books, they all integrate alternative material, mostly of political content, like material about current refugee struggles (e.g. the so called Refugee Tent Action⁴⁷); readings on the extreme-right, Nazi group 'Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund', direct action events that take place in Germany, in Europe, and news of the world relating to uprising and relevant issues concerning justice and equality (G., 2013; S., 2011).

The way that the classes are taught is also not generally top-down. Worldword do not ascribe to a specific radical pedagogy and from the testimony of some politically engaged students I interviewed the awareness and defiance of internal hierarchies varies from teacher to teacher (P., 2013; R., 2013). In the classes I assisted, however, the students were left a lot of room to bring in themselves and information to share with other students. The teachers I spoke to and whose classes I assisted, purposely adopt as non-hierarchical pedagogy as possible (within the limits set by having to prepare the students to pass the test), involving the students and using peer-to-peer correction rather than assuming, and taking on the leader role.

The facilitation of exchange and mutual support amongst students is not only important to de-centralise the teaching and learning experience, it also allows multilingualism and dialogue to take place on different levels. When working together, students are most likely to use their first languages or other commonly understood languages in order to understand and help each other, thus placing a lessened value on the predominance of the (official) language to be learnt. Also, when speaking together students develop new languages that can take on unexpected results for the teacher. As G. told me:

“sometimes I listen to students speaking [German] with each other and I don't

⁴⁷ During my observation in September 2012, I witnessed flyers being distributed in class. The refugee protest has been happening around Germany since May 2012. Refugees and asylum seekers from all over Germany have been camping since October 2012 in the centre of Berlin, to permanently protest against residence restrictions, and the deportation machine (Refugee Tent Action, 2012).

understand them, but they know exactly what they are talking about, so I'm happy with that. It is my task to develop my understanding. It is not students who have to speak 'accent-free'" (G., 2013, my translation). This suggests exactly that kind of facilitation to dialogue and polyglossia referred to by English for Action (Bryers, 2013; Bryers, Cooke & Winstanley, 2013), where students create their own language independently from the teacher, and through so doing challenge and disrupt the supposed unity and correctness of the national language.

Of course, experiences of daily racism based, amongst other things, on monoglossia will and do remind of the privilege conferred by mastering the official language with little or no accent (it is often the case that people on the streets, clerks, and authorities do not make any effort to understand people with an 'accent') (G., 2013; R., 2013). Hence, the language that allows communication amongst students in class, could as much be leading to networking and mutual support, as it could meet racist and oppressive interlocutors in other settings. Thinking with Bakhtin, oppressive as well as empowering and transformative effects are indeed to be found in every language (hence heteroglossia). It is though the opportunity to generate something new through dialogue, which will aid challenging oppression and current arrangements of citizenship as integration or 'fitting in', allowing for new alliances and disruption from the margins.

Going back to a concrete case within Worldword, on a couple of occasions the class reportedly functioned as platform in which more than one student communicated to the teacher and to each other their experience of racism within a local government office, where they would have to go and get a specific document for enrolling in a language class, but where they were not understood, treated badly if not speaking German well and even denied this document. After communicating and discussing about it, teachers and students jointly decided on complaining, and a delegation of them went to the head officer and raised the problem, which then seemed to decrease (G., 2013). What this example shows is how communication about felt injustice can lead to joint action.

Importantly, what happened was not along the lines of teaching how to better function linguistically in an official context (thus fostering personal empowerment), but it was about complaining about the clerks not welcoming different languages, thus attempting to transform and challenge a monolingualistic, racist institution. Finally, it also suggests that the environment in which this exchange happened, a class where accents and multilingualism are encouraged, made this action possible.

Because of the political environment of the school, students of Worldword are likely to feel encouraged to be openly critical of authorities. For instance, in a class I attended in October 2012, during a lesson about prepositions and specifically the expression 'sich ärgern über' (getting upset *about*) one student said loudly: "I get angry about police!" Some students nodded in agreement, while others still looked a bit puzzled, the effects of this communication left unknown and unpredictable. On another occasion, a discussion in class on racist police identity controls led students to discuss strategies about how to disrupt these in case they would happen to witness one. They talked about requesting the identification number of the police officer. A few days later one student who had learnt this at the time of the discussion, shared with the class how he interrupted a racist raid in a park and asked for the identification of one police officer (G., 2013).

This is another example of how information exchange and dialogue about injustice, which necessarily happen through language (and in the case of this class are even used tools to expand on one's knowledge of the latter) can lead to develop strategies to resist oppression, to network, to challenge current racist regimes, even in settings such as an Integrationskurs. It actually shows how in these settings citizenship and social order are not merely reproduced, but enacted and challenged through enabling contestation through language.

Other important examples of such exchanges and their leading to joint action are exchanges about preventing deportation in airports, where three students spoke in front

of the class about having stopped the deportation of three people in a German airport (G., 2013); or discussions about undocumented workers' rights, which led to the formation of a working group on undocumented labour. The latter itself then led to joint work with one workers' union that agreed to start representing the rights of undocumented workers, and to the production of a video in which teachers and students of Worldword explain how to go about collecting proof of working hours (such as text messages from the boss) in order to denounce exploitation and lack of pay through this union (G., 2013; S., 2011). Again, in a site where language is supposed to be taught for integration and scripted citizenship, political exchanges take place, which are driven by a sense of justice – already present for the ones communicating about possible action, and emerging in the moment of taking part and contributing to such action for the ones responding (hence the dialogical element) to such communication.

The fragility and potential of an official class with an alternative, political claim

This glance over the teaching practice and environment of Worldword conveys that even official classes can and do become sites of transformative citizenship. It is clear that the subjects that emerge or are already involved in Worldword's classes as students are very different from the desirable citizen or well-integrated migrant who is the target of scripted citizenship through official classes. Worldword is actually a difficult to define project, which in its very being defies dualistic descriptions not only of alternative vs. official language, but also of the respective classes.

Official classes aimed at integration and social order in Germany (even if the outcome of the language and dialogue made possible through them would remain unknown) would hardly talk about Nazis, or even less about how to challenge police and authorities. Worldword shows not only how resistance takes place within the restrictive

and exclusionary attempts of the state, i.e. by using its funding to keep the prices down, subverting the testing regime through cheating, and providing free places for undocumented and other students. Worldword also provides a politically aware environment in which language is not taken as a neutral means, but its political embeddedness is questioned, and dialogue and multilingualism are fostered. In its being and acting openly political and critical, Worldword's members can be seen as following a principle of justice, against police and state repression and racism and against its filtering mechanisms.

Probably attracted by the past and present history of Worldword, many of the students who attend this school are already engaged in activism of many sorts, anti-racism, anti-fascism, queer politics and anti-repression amongst others. Importantly, these students, through the open space of Worldword and through the language taught get to communicate with other students whom they would maybe not have encountered. Through dialogue more possibilities for joint action can take place and new forms of citizenship as transformation are enacted, where institutional racism is challenged and labour rights for undocumented migrants are demanded.

I have already argued that official language classes have the potential to become transformative sites of citizenship. I also highlighted that this does not mean that all language classes are to be read as equally potential sites for the enactment of citizenship. Every site, like every act of citizenship is unique, as opposed to its habitus (Isin & Nielsen, 2008, p. 10), and surely to say that official classes may become such sites does clearly not mean that they all are.

Worldword is a good example of how the awareness of the politicality of language and of language teaching, and the positioning against the dominant culture of integration promoted by the government, do provide a space which is more likely to enhance dialogue, and my reading of it as a site of citizenship as enactment depends strongly on

that.

Mg., one of the teachers I interviewed, recalled that when she was working in another official school (Volkshochschule) she was also bringing in political content amongst her teaching materials, but it was much harder there to get students to talk about these contents or overtly political contents at all, probably because of the official environment of the classes (Mg., 2011). This does not have to signify, however, that Worldword has the key of success for the disruption of citizenship and for aiding the emergence of new subjects of rights, or that it is exempt from problems, fragility and contradictions. Saying this would be limiting and would buy into dualistic thinking, as much as ascribing such key to a specific methodology would, as I addressed in Chapter 2. For instance, S., talking about his role in Worldword, says: “it is still a paid job for me, I would not say that a political approach to language teaching would not be taking place in other schools with less overt political orientation” (S., 2011, my translation). Also, according to S.:

Speaking of political topics does not mean that the classes bring about politicisation per se (...) Worldword provides: a space for socialising, making friends, exchange knowledge and get information on one's rights, important language for important situations and most importantly a safe space.” (S., 2011, my translation)

In S.'s contribution two important aspects of language classes are being referred to.

First, language schools become platform for dialogical exchanges not only through the very classes, but also through their provision of a, in the case of Worldword, 'safe' space to socialise and come in contact with people. The aspect of sociality, enhanced by extra curricular activities and events organised at Worldword, is one that may or may not add to its difference from a normal, official school. As P., a student who accessed one of the free places provided, points out:

...there are also friendships built once you study together. Between the students I mean, and of course this goes as all the friendships go... (P., 2013)

Whilst friendships and sociality of course can and do take place within any language class, it is important to bear in mind the fact that some undocumented or precarious Worldword's students would probably not have had the opportunity to enrol in another school, and the latter would probably not have proven as a safe space to them. Moreover, the specific activities of Worldword and its political environment may facilitate specific and different forms of sociality. However, as we will see below, safe spaces are not automatically created by facilitating access to a language class. Worldword's example will confirm how domination and oppression cannot be rid of at will, and may, and do also get reproduced through the heteroglossic, not per se empowering power of language.

Secondly, S.'s statement is also important in that it highlights the possibility for political approaches to language in official classes in general; it refers to the impossibility of intentionally bringing about change and politicisation; and it sees the role of Worldword as a not infallible platform which allows specific transformative dialogue and exchange. The latter, as I argued so far, is key to the enactment of citizenship, but it is never working through intentionality only.

During my research, I faced the impossibility of analysing Worldword in merely transformative terms. Worldword's politicality is ridden by contradictions, being strictly related to language in its multiplicity and holding an important, but sometimes uncomfortable position between state acknowledgment, reproduction of integration, radical left politics and aims to subversion and transformation. The collective that runs

it is sometimes caught in internal political conflicts and at least two of the approximately 20 teachers (numbers vary) have had complaints made about them for reproducing hierarchical teaching, not critically using official materials, and using tokenising and racist language in class (G., 2013; P., 2013; R., 2013).

One big critique is the fact that the school reproduces the naturalisation of national languages by employing overwhelmingly native speakers of the languages taught (G., 2013; R., 2013). Debates over the links between language teaching ability and being native speaker have been repeatedly present in the Worldword collective. Opinions are to date still divided (G., 2013). This is a clear example of how rhetorics of national belonging, monolingualism and the power of dominant language are present and can get reproduced in politicised environments such as Worldword. The argument that native speakers have got better knowledge of the language than non-native speakers is necessarily linked to the idea of the existence of a real, legitimate and correct language, learned at best through upbringing, closeness and belonging. This idea is strongly debated even within mainstream language pedagogies (Medgyes, 1992). In the case of teachers of other languages it may work as tokenising of language and culture, whilst in the case of German classes it may work as reinforcing the hierarchical difference between students and teachers.

A student self defining as PoC⁴⁸ community organiser, pointed out how until little before I interviewed her, all of the German teacher were white Germans: “now there is a black German woman teaching too, I wonder what her role is” (R., 2013, my translation). Most likely referring to the teacher's role as a token, R., who has been in and out of the school for a few years, also strongly complained about two teachers who had used racist language in class, one of them having said the 'N. word' three times, while teaching about problematic language. R. recalls how she was hurt and appalled and had to complain in class, generating a heightened discussion where most of the class was

⁴⁸ PoC is an acronym for the reappropriated political identity: “person of colour” (Yuen, 1997).

defending that the word was used by black people themselves in television and therefore not such a problem anymore. Under the few people supporting R. was the only black person in class, who was addressed and looked at by most others and therefore basically made to take a stance. The situation was felt as quite disempowering by R. who also felt responsible for having raised the problem, given the tokenising and uncomfortable position in which her fellow student was put in (R., 2013).

This anecdote is another clear example of the impossibility to wash away hurtful language at will (Butler, 1997), and of the limits as well as the potential of dialogue. Yes, dialogue can of course be hurtful. Its unknown outcomes are indeed unknown and do not give any guarantee of being, staying or becoming positive. Its limits are still strictly linked to its potentials: as much as one cannot willingly prevent history laden language to hurt, the dialogue cannot be fully stopped, and its meanings will never be fixed (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981). R. also tells how, after this episode, in the hope the teacher would not repeat the same in another class, she brought her some readings and a few weeks later she was approached and thanked by the her for it (R., 2013). One cannot know all what will have changed because of R.'s intervention, but this will definitely have had some repercussion that changed some people's minds and contributed to further reflection and hopefully improvement of the Worldword classes. These classes are often theatre of discussions amongst students, about racism as well as about homophobia and transphobia. These discussion, as seen above, cannot merely be described as fruitful and can be hurtful for some people involved. A student, self identifying as PoC migrant active in migrants' organising, P., points out:

There was several times discussions about racism in different classes I was in. And the teachers find it cool, because they see it as an opportunity for you to practice German. But I personally ended up in many situations when it was only I, and the rest of the class -white Europeans - discussing about the definition of racism and Black people can be

racist against white people and blah blah.. And it was obviously the teacher pushing the topic, like pushing that there would be a discussion. So I think this comes with the fact that the people are not reflected⁴⁹, as they see as no problem putting a person who positions themselves as PoC, or migrant, in a situation that they have to discuss against a group of 10 white people... So it doesn't mean at all that just because they say they are political, that they don't reproduce power dynamics... (P., 2013)

Again, this example shows the difficulty and fragility of politics, especially relating to different positionalities and power relations. Both P. and R. have talked about setting up a German class taught by PoC's. P., talking about the reproduction of power dynamics in Worldword, said: "... this is why I was wishing for non-white teachers, and I thought they could relate to a common experience, and could empathise much better with the students, the situation and the every day racism and discrimination they feel, so that it doesn't happen again in the 'political' language school" (P., 2013). R. instead referred to the fact that "having someone [as a teacher] who can see you as a person is super important, it is a responsibility and a power position, their work is super important and they should take it more seriously... There is the idea, being worked on now, of setting up a [German] class by and for PoC and Black people" (R., 2013, my translation).

It is crucial to note how, through and because of the tensions and problems arising, the idea of creating another, better, political language class by some of those very 'undesirable' migrants who however accessed an official class⁵⁰ emerged. Instead of pointing at the ultimate failure of Worldword, its fragility and the problematic and power dynamics-laden approach of some of its teachers are an expression of and reflect the potential of its politicality. The reaction of these two students, and their engagement in changing the situation, through dialogue with teachers and other students, as well as

⁴⁹ 'Not reflected' refers in here to not having analysed and reflected on one's privilege and power positioning (McIntosh, 1988).

⁵⁰ Both R. and P., at different times in the past, took up the free places available in Worldword. R. because of low income, and P. because of both low income and of being undocumented.

through setting up their own language class happened within the political platform provided by Worldword.

P. explains how, after some discussion on racism, two people had changed their minds and understood his point, while on one other occasion he distributed in class Peggy McIntosh's 'White Privilege Checklist' (McIntosh, 1988), and noted how one student had changed their rhetoric in class after reading it (P., 2013).

Whilst it is not excluded that such events could happen in a 'normal' official language course, the politicality of Worldword definitely contributed to making enactments of citizenship like these students' reactions to racism and active engagement in the proposal of a different, PoC class. The very P. recalls how uncomfortable discussions do of course happen in normal schools as well, but "when the other schools don't claim to be political, you don't get so much pissed 'cause its part of the normality, but seeing the same shit also in places which claim to be political creates a bigger disappointment I think..." (P., 2013). This disappointment, however, instead of inhibiting action, proves as a motor. The dialogue taking place in Worldword through the oppressive language of the 'non reflected' activists/teacher did not reproduce exclusion on the lines of race, it rather was countered by the presence, language and political subjectivity of P. and R., at least in this case. P. concludes:

I think in general [Worldword] is good, and I also benefitted from them - free German course, or showing different things on paper, or letting me not go and sign later when I was by the job centre... I just think that every critic which could be made for white dominated lefty groups in Germany could be also made on [them]. (P., 2013)

Clearly, Worldword is not exempt from the domination often reproduced through language, and in particular within unreflected political activism, but it does prove as a site where the exclusion/inclusion paradigm is strongly challenged, and where

enactments of citizenship from the margins take place. To acknowledge the limits and fragility of Worldword and arguing how these are not only restrictive but they are the condition for enabling change, does not mean not to see the elements of oppression at work in the lack of reflection of some of its teachers.

Worldword's fragility (and as we will see, also that of the other projects) can also definitely lead to interruptions in dialogue, to silencing, and to hurtful language that may inhibit, rather than foster change. It is therefore important, on the one hand, to point out how reactions to domination are always present by oppressed subjects (as in the case of R. and P.); and, on the other hand, to try to defy and reflect on the power of language in order to maximise the potential of dialogue, rather than tending to close it down.

Worldword as site of dynamic and fragile acts of citizenship

The case of Worldword tells about resistance to exclusionary logics; about disrupting ways of teaching and exchanging language; and about a site in which citizenship as membership is challenged by avoiding the production of the good citizen and rather providing the space for contestation and transformation. It also reminds of the fragility and difficulty of projects juggling with different languages, official and non, and different positionalities, being limited by funding, by oppressive and sedimented language and by lack of reflection on the latter. Such fragility however does not mean to function as inhibiting action. On the contrary it is strictly linked to the very unknown possibilities entailed within dialogical transformation.

What's most important, is that within Worldword, the terms of what national language brings to politics are transformed. Instead of creating the political subject desired by instituted scripts of active citizenship, i.e. reproduction and maintenance, some of the

subjects emerging from these classes can be definitely seen as actors of citizenship, engaging in its transformation through language and collective action. I am thinking of the very people setting up the classes, who challenge the filters of citizenship operating through language politics; I am thinking of the students and teachers engaging in dialogues that lead to the challenge of deportations, police controls etc.; as well as to P. and R. and their acts of disruption and challenge of racist language and of engagement in setting up their own alternative language class.

The example of Worldword indeed contrasts highly with an understanding of citizenship as exclusionary and restricted to inclusion and to the practice of it by the included. It shows how the testing regimes and the language policies on migration discussed in Chapter 1 are not being imposed on passive victims of exclusion, but are contested, challenged and transformed from within.

I am arguing for a reading of Worldword's classes as a fragile and dynamic site of acts of transformative citizenship. According to Isin's theory a site of citizenship is a site from which citizenship is enacted, from which new actors of citizenship constitute themselves as such through an act. In this respect, what is the case of Worldword taken as a whole if not an act of citizenship that challenges and disrupts? The act is though a dynamic set of acts: of establishing, maintaining, teaching, attending, taking part, as well as of challenging, criticising and transforming language classes that, through this fragile, broken yet continuous process disrupt the way national language functions as major tool of maintenance of scripted citizenship. It is a very open-ended and not clear-cut set of acts, which needs and is getting continued improvement⁵¹, and which discloses a different way of doing politics and new subjects that appropriate and create new languages, and whose effects are sometimes difficult to pinpoint because of the indeterminacy of language itself, of its internal multiplicity, and because of the

⁵¹ Such improvement could go in the direction of fostering more reflection amongst its teachers, but also of its very dismantlement in view of a possibly better, more dialogical and less oppressive language school, as envisioned by R. and P.

unpredictability of dialogue.

The fragility and potential of the politicality of Worldword, as mentioned above, is linked to the unpredictability of language and dialogue as much as to its position as official school with alternative praxis and political purposiveness. Now, it is interesting to ask about the extent to which Worldword's politicality is bound to its links with officiality, to its alternative praxis or to its position in the middle of it. I argued in the first section that the *potential* of becoming a site of transformation through and because of language and dialogue is indeed present in any language class. Yet, I have also mentioned, with Isin, that every site is unique and that it is important to analyse it in its specificity. Not all classes are the same, not all official classes are the same, and not all alternative classes are the same. The very descriptions they get here as official and alternative are meant to ease the analysis of their specific enactments and politicality, rather than to produce dualisms. Worldword's enactments are then specific to its unstable, middle position that challenges strongly the binary of inclusion/exclusion. Moreover, its purposiveness is rooted in challenging instituted mechanisms of citizenship, migration control and restriction, backed by a shared principle of justice. It is fundamental to this research to show how this challenge can and does take place from the margins. Whilst Worldword does work as a site where the former takes place, its strong bonds with officiality obviously distinguish it from other classes, and sites, which are completely detached from the government and other authorities. The latter are therefore no less transformative, as much as no less fragile, but their politicality is indeed informed by their being independent and self-organised sites of disruption of citizenship from the margin through language. They are what I called the 'alternative' language classes of x:talk and Asociación de Sin Papeles. It is now time to analyse these sites in turn.

x:talk, sex workers enacting citizenship through language

x:talk was founded in 2006, growing from the experiences of a sex worker named Alice⁵², who had worked in a brothel in South London in 2005. Alongside Alice there were two other women working in this brothel, both from Thailand. Alice soon realised that she was being paid more than the other two, probably because of her white European appearance, she thought. There was however also another reason why Alice was getting more money out of her clients: she could speak English, could therefore negotiate with them and become friendly with the maid, who would then close an eye if Alice was getting tipped. The two other women could communicate very little, but Alice understood that they were under debt bondage. They had to pay 20,000 pounds to the people who facilitated their entry in the country, before they could start earning their money and get back their passports. Alice was compelled to ask if she could help them in any way, but they were quick to make it clear that they didn't need any help. What they would have liked however, was to learn English. Alice started giving the first x:talk classes whilst waiting for clients, in this South London brothel. What Alice realised was the importance of being able to communicate in order to be able to organise at work. As one can read on the x:talk website: "x:talk is not about helping people, but about collective action and solidarity" (x:talk, 2013).

Since those first language classes x:talk has gone a long way. It has become a workers' cooperative funded by the Oak Foundation (The Oak Foundation, 2011, p. 70-71) and it has taught diverse sets of classes in a number of different locations in London, starting from women and trans women only sexual health clinics, and progressively finding independent safe and confidential spaces in central London to run mixed gender classes, and finally setting up classes in brothels, and special classes for dancers and strippers in the top floor of a bar in Soho and in a strip club in Hackney. The organising collective

⁵² Not her real name.

was and is made of a majority of sex workers, migrants and non, and a few allies.

It has always been very important for x:talk to share language knowledge in order to break barriers, to communicate with each other and to organise politically. The wish to build bridges and to avoid 'helping' and reproducing hierarchies of stigma and knowledge brought us to decide that the language teachers had to have worked or be working as sex workers too, and that they had to take a politically aware approach to language and language teaching. The students, in turn, were invited since the start to participate in the organisation of the classes and in its further political organising work for the rights of migrant sex workers. Throughout the years a number of students came and went from the collective and others stayed for longer periods.

The x:talk classes are open for all sex workers regardless of their status, the language used and produced is the language needed at work and beyond, the language the students wish to learn, and a language of rights, where sex work is not stigmatised but rather seen as our common work. Beyond the classes, x:talk has also been involved in and organised a number of protests, campaigns and research projects aimed at raising awareness about and condemning the damaging effects of anti-trafficking policies and measures on the lives of migrant sex workers.

x:talk, through its language classes, through the positioning of the sex workers and activists involved in giving and organising them, and through its activism for the rights of sex workers represents a multiple site of acts of citizenship. These range from the very classes with their dialogic dynamics to the actions and campaigns organised by the collective, to the very act of establishing the classes. I will now turn to illustrate each of these in detail, starting with the first site of transformation, the classes themselves.

From the outset, classes have been taught and attended by current and former sex workers. The teachers are more often than not non-native speakers (avoiding to reproduce the nexus between authenticity, belonging and correctness of language), though experienced or qualified in teaching languages. In class, multiple languages are spoken and translated, aided by the presence of multilingual teaching assistants and teachers, which go to challenge monolingualist approaches to national language teaching.

The x:talk classes have got as focus sex work situations, the needs and wishes of the students, and the importance of knowledge sharing and dialogue amongst marginalised yet expert workers, cutting across dividing lines of class, languages spoken and (un)documented status. In this respect, since the very first classes the language taught worked as a means to start communicating about our diverse experiences at work and to attempt to find common grounds, peer-to-peer support and collective mobilisation.

Strategies to work in better conditions were exchanged, like language to bring the clients to ask for what we, as workers, would have actually preferred. For instance, in the first class I taught in 2007 in a sexual health clinic in London, one student, and undocumented woman working in a flat, who would usually tend to prefer to communicate in Spanish or Portuguese, was bringing in a huge range of vocabulary in English to positively describe her body and services, whilst we would often brainstorm and come up with our own language to portray for instance our short bodies as petite, or our safer sex practice as, that notwithstanding, “the best BJ you will have ever had.”

The language created led to common strategies to get better working arrangements, as convincing the boss to give us free time to go to our morning class, with phrases like “I must learn English, so we can all earn better.” English knowledge was indeed seen by us all as fundamental for working better, earning more, as well as for knowing our way

with bosses and clients. Further strategies discussed in class would be about changing jobs within the industry, or de-escalating with aggressive clients.

The content of these first exchanges and dialogues built confidence and rapport amongst teachers and students. Using the scenery of a criminalised industry as teaching material for a language class worked alone as defying stigma for the people attending. At the beginning of the classes nobody was talking about their particular situations, or their workplaces. By the third time we met the situation had radically changed.

However, there were also moments where conflicting interests would come out: for instance the need to make money vs. the need to stay safe. Some of the students would put emphasis on the need to keep the clients, others on their health. This was cutting across class and migration status. The discussions arising were important in that the dialogue emerging would lead to new negotiation, amongst workers, of working standards such as never having penetrative sex without a condom. Another example of language created in class is: “No darling, I don't do it. It is safer for you and for me”.

Whilst all of the above examples seem to indicate self-empowerment, the element of transformation is to be found in the breakage of isolation, taboo and stigma that confine sex work as one of the most dangerous and criminalised professions (Pheterson, 1993). The creation of language that recognises sex work as work is indeed, in a context of criminalisation, an act of disruption and transformation, and an act of citizenship. As Giulia Garofalo argues in her yet unpublished, valuable PhD research, the recognition of sex work as work, with the end of its stigma, is to be seen as utterly dangerous for the dominant social order, as stigma and criminalisation serve to keep in a marginal position those lowest-class subjects, i.e. migrant, women, transgender and queer people, which would gain too much power if the money they were making would be secured and de-stigmatised (Garofalo, 2010). It is the fragility of sex workers' positions in the social order what makes x:talk's dialogical exchanges the more politically challenging.

In this respect, the discussion and dialogue referred to above, about how to reach better and safer conditions whilst not losing money, are an essential moment on the path of strengthening and formulating a language of rights and standard at work. This, in such a criminalised industry, may well happen in the very small and marginal scale of a six student x:talk class, but it can still mean a lot when being read, as I am doing, as a moment of enactment of citizenship. Enactment finds here its transformative element (or its act) in the dialogic and collective moment of coming together and deciding the conditions in which we should attempt to work, in a criminalised industry which is structurally and not casually open to often doubly criminalised, migrant female or trans gendered persons (Garofalo, 2010). I am here reading the (undocumented) sex workers involved in discussing standards of work as political subjects in the making, in the fragile but important position of indirectly enacting the rights to work.

I would like to now take a look at another example of dialogue which reflected complexity, fragility and enactment within the x:talk class themselves. Between 2011 and 2012 x:talk ran a class in a sauna/brothel in North London. In these classes, the three teachers/assistants (I was one of them) identified as sex workers and talked at times about the political work of x:talk in class and about different ways to work in the sex industry. A very good rapport between sex workers of different positionalities and backgrounds (three migrant x:talk sex workers activists with work and residence permits, and six to seven migrant women with restricted work permits) was established. At the beginning there was suspicion, probably also because the classes had been allowed to take place by the maid and boss, who saw in the possible improvement of the workers' English a possibility for better income. However, within little time, confidence was built. As previously mentioned, during one class the point was reached, where a dialogue on how to deal with the boss and the maid had to take place in a mix of Italian, Spanish and Romanian, i.e. in a new and contingent language in many ways, which

allowed us sex workers to communicate undetected by the English (only) speaking managers.

While in class, us x:talk teachers witnessed abuse of some workers by the bosses and maid. For example, the maid had once screamed and shouted at the workers saying that they would not keep the place clean enough, threatening to take money off them for doing so. The students/workers told us that they thought the racist maid intended to humiliate them in front of us: to prove they were dirty and ignorant.

In another instance, the boss made his appearance and demanded to have sex with one of the women working there. She refused on that occasion but came to tell us she cannot refuse all the time if she doesn't want to lose her job. It was obvious that certain abuse was supported by the very criminalised nature of her work (lack of workers' rights to name the most evident reason). We were though all compelled to discuss such abuse and not accept it as a given. While talking about these problems and possible solutions, what took place was again a first step towards workers' organising, towards the enactment of the right to have (workers') rights, complaining about and attempting to challenge injustice at work. The language classes enabled a dialogue where some sex workers could exchange problems and solutions, the latter being both talking about long-term political engagement for sex workers rights, or simply thinking ways of leaving bad working conditions for better ones.

Shortly after the end of the 12 week course, some of the students found better workplaces, and one of them got more involved in one of x:talk's campaigns, against the arrests of sex workers during the London Olympics (x:talk, 2012). Whilst the boss and maid were convinced that the classes would make the workers better functioning for the job, they indeed brought sex workers together who used their skills, their languages, in order to communicate about unfairness at work engaging in a subversive first step of organising from such fragile positions within such a criminalised, and thus exploitative industry.

This instance is another example of how, despite the criminalisation and the actively sought exclusion of sex workers from workers' rights, and from formal citizenship, these subjects engage in organising themselves and, through language and dialogue, enter work spaces and enact their rights to improve their working conditions. Because they challenge the logic of exclusion and because of the very fragility of sex work, I believe that the above examples can be read as enactments of rights by sex workers. Sex workers indeed demonstrate their presence and agency as workers by engaging in contesting abusive working structures and criminalisation, rather than being the excluded victims with no agency. At the same time, their own position as criminalised and stigmatised subjects who are not supposed to have rights (i.e. the fragility of sex work) makes their acting a transformative disruptive enactment of citizenship.

The enactment itself is of course a messy and fragile one: the presence of the language teachers did not deter abuse in the workplace, and it may even be the case that the latter was made worse by our presence. The workers in the brothel said they thought the maid was abusing them more to make them 'look bad' in front of us.

On the one hand, this example shows the fragility of a project like x:talk, and the impossibility of sealing the analysis on its enactments, without leaving any room to contradictions. It is after all also the nature of language and dialogue to be able to bear very different outcomes. On the other hand, fragility is always present, becoming nearly condition for the subversive politicality of projects like x:talk which have to juggle with criminalisation, stigma, different positionalities amongst sex workers, and the very unpredictability of language and dialogue with their often concomitantly oppressive and transformative power.

Because of this fragility, the example of x:talk should also demonstrate the counterproductivity of dogmatism in transformative politics from the margins. For instance, the very political term 'sex workers', revindicated by activists since the early

80's in the English speaking context as a stigma-free term indicating agency rather than victimhood (Ditmore, 2011, p. 111; Hardy, Kingston, & Sanders, 2010, p. 3), should not be taken for granted in its supposedly empowering character. As Melissa Ditmore suggests, referring to Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore's novel (Sycamore, 2000), it can also denote for some a merely privileged standpoint. Some would hence prefer to name the profession for what is in society and how it is lived upon one's body (e.g. hustler, or hooker) (Ditmore, 2006, p. XXV). Moreover, scholars like Katie Cruz and Julia O'Connell Davidson have shown how struggles for labour rights following a mere mainstreaming of sex work as work are insufficient if not coupled with a more materialist analysis and challenge to other economic and social relations (Cruz, 2013; O'Connell Davidson, 2002).

Indeed, not all students of x:talk are happy to call themselves sex workers or to identify as such. Some have clearly stated that they were only doing this job for necessity, they did not want to talk about it outside of work, and wanted to soon have it behind them and forget it completely⁵³. Some students would also never be interested in becoming part of the collective, and are likely annoyed by x:talkers' emphasis on sex work language and on sex workers' comradeship and rights. The x:talk classes may definitely not prove empowering for all students.

To reflect more on the issue of identifying oneself as a sex worker I would now go back to an illustration of the classes. Some of the classes x:talk offered in the years were based in a couple of different safe spaces in central London. In these classes, the composition of the students was ever changing, it was nearly impossible to predict how many would turn up, and who will turn up. New students were always welcome. For this reason, at the beginning of every x:talk class the teacher would introduce herself as

⁵³ Echoes of how stigma affects sex workers in this way can be found in the great analysis of sex work, migration and citizenship, based on interviews with migrant sex workers in Italy by Rutvica Andrijasevic (Andrijasevic, 2010).

a sex worker, member of a group of sex workers of different backgrounds, x:talk, which was organising for their rights to make a living in the UK, free from criminalisation. She would say that confidentiality was crucial: everyone was free but not expected to disclose information on whether they were working or not, where, or on their personal or private lives. This would lead to presenting an environment in which from the start sex work was recognised as legitimate but also the students were left their space to decide how to position themselves: whether taking up the political identity 'sex workers' or not; whether to communicate with others about their specific jobs or not; and whether to share tips and strategies on how to work in better conditions or on how to deal with bosses and maids. In all of the classes I attended as either teaching assistant or teacher, the majority of students would sooner rather than later talk about their job, although there would be always some who would not. We also had discussions about the term sex workers. We would ask what was understood under it and would explain what it meant for us: an umbrella political term which encompasses most people who work in the sex industry/adult entertainment industry, selling sex in flats/brothels, escorting, stripping, performing BDSM for money, modelling, acting in porn movies etc. (Hardy et al., 2010, p. 3). We would then explain that the term is political because it implies seeing sex work as legitimate work, and it aims at decreasing the stigma attached to it by pushing for alliances across different occupations in the industry. Many students would answer that they did not use or know the term but they would understand 'selling sex' under it. The results of our talks about the identity of sex workers were diverse. Some students would happily take on the identity, others would contest it and refuse it saying that that was what they did to make a living and they would rather not see it as their identity, rather hide it. Others, probably echoing Ditmore's remark (Ditmore, 2006, p. XXV), would rather keep the known terms, dismissive of euphemisms.

This example of what happens within the x:talk classes is another indication of a fragile, undogmatic moment of enactment and disruption of citizenship. The teacher who

identifies herself as a sex worker and refers to the work of x:talk is communicating the existence of a political identity that may become shared as well as contested, reformulated and resignified, and whose political agenda is far from fixed and defined. The dialogic communication about self-definition is part of one of the main aspects of the work of x:talk, that is, creating bridges against the isolation in which migrant and non-migrant sex workers live and work, in order to fight together against criminalisation and for the transformation of the industry.

This move, although not always resulting in immediate new comradeship amongst students and x:talk, can be seen as enacting citizenship through the very positioning at the core of a language class the political, controversial and fragile identity of the sex worker and a political agenda for her decriminalisation regardless of her migration status. Where (official) language classes are supposed to reproduce the good, active citizen as legitimate political actor, x:talk replaces it with a new activist subject, the (migrant) sex worker. I will go back to this in the section on reading x:talk's classes establishment as an act of citizenship. For now, I want to reiterate that, because the reactions of the students are not always immediately positive or welcoming, and the very term 'sex worker' is not taken for granted or imposed, this move initiates new forms of dialogue on work, migration and the sex industry that lead to the reformulation of new subjects taking their right to learning the language, to be acknowledged as workers, i.e. to exist and act not as excluded, criminalised or marginalised subjects.

As regards to the reactions of the students to the identification as sex workers, their variety is exemplary of how dialogue is always producing unexpected and diverse outcomes. It therefore also reminds that it is not enough to have a political agenda or to teach a certain language to bring about a specific politicisation of a group (or to reproduce the good active citizen as in the case of official classes).

One should not forget however the temporal aspect of the classes: they were and are happening over time, and some students who at the beginning were not drawn to x:talk's

approach or politics did get involved or more interested. Importantly, two of the students who would not adopt the identity of sex worker, were however not alienated by the political, revindicative character of x:talk. They nevertheless joined the collective sporadically and brought the term sex worker into discussion. Language was at his making again: Aicram⁵⁴ (one of these two students, who became a teaching assistant and activist in x:talk) insisted on how the term 'working girl' was much more commonly used amongst female brothel or flat workers. Through dialogues with Aicram in x:talk meetings we came to the conclusion that even if working girl was not as a clear political identity as 'sex work' (it protected more from the stigma, challenging it less by omitting the word 'sex', and it was hardly an umbrella term in terms of gender) it still was highlighting that it was work what was being undertaken. Whilst of course not applying to all genders, x:talk started adding this word onto its flyers and teaching material, alongside other terms, which would speak to more workers. A term that was before internal and nearly exclusive to the industry of flat/brothel work was now entering the curriculum of the language classes and the public sphere through x:talk written work (e.g. researches, articles, or its website). This is another good example of how, through communication and dialogue, politics got generated together, with new ways of claiming rights, defining work and naming oneself, despite the victimisation, stigmatisation and criminalisation of migrant sex workers in mainstream politics.

In sum, the politicality of x:talk does not function, importantly, despite its fragility, but precisely because of it. Because of the fragility of the positioning of the actors involved; of the industry they work in; and of the project itself, which is about organising migrant sex workers through language. The latter being at the same time a central and most unpredictable condition as much for political change as for the reproduction of domination.

It is impossible for a project like x:talk not to raise possible controversies. These classes

⁵⁴ Aicram being the name this activist and sex worker uses in public.

are not merely about empowering the students, but they are about organising politically. That is clear from the way they will not refrain from talking openly about our work to avoid hurting some students. The students participating in the dialogue, and their learning needs are listened to and taken on board, but the x:talk classes go beyond a mere helping tool for the personal empowerment of the student. Through peer-to-peer exchange they bring in dialogue about transforming sex work's conditions, claiming rights and countering criminalisation, of sex work as well as of migration. What is more, it is precisely because of the fragile position of sex workers in society that their coming together and building new voices and language obtains its disruptive, political character. Therefore I would argue that x:talk engages in enacting citizenship, rather than helping people, and that its fragility is the condition of such enactment, and of its contradictory, unpredictable dialogical politicality from the margins.

x:talk and mobilisation

I would like to now turn to what may be seen as more 'traditional' acts of citizenship. It is the case that around x:talk, students, teachers, sex worker rights activists and allies have come to organise themselves in order to resist the criminalisation of migrant sex workers, contributing to and co-organising demonstrations and critical interventions and debates on issues of gender, sexuality, migration and labour (x:talk, 2013). x:talk has also carried out and published research on the impact of anti-trafficking measures on the lives of migrant sex workers (x:talk, 2010a), a campaign for a Moratorium against the Arrests of Sex Workers during the London 2012 Olympics (x:talk, 2012), and activists in x:talk have become requested interlocutors in matters of sex work, trafficking, criminalisation of clients, crackdown on prostitution, human rights, health etc. by mainstream media, and international independent and governmental institutions like the

Central America Women's Network, and the Home Office itself⁵⁵. In 2011, x:talk was asked to join in giving their informed opinion in matters of 'effective practice' relating to prostitution by the Home Office, and it currently keeps receiving the attention of media in the UK (Boff, 2013; Doward, 2012; Taylor, 2007).

Apart from participating in demonstrations for labour rights like May Day and Reclaim the Night in London, or intervening in numerous feminist, queer, migrant and sex workers rights local and international events like Feminist Fight Back Conference and the No Border Convergence in London, Queer Belgrade in Serbia, Generi Sommersi in Italy, Genderfuck in Czech Republic, Sex Worker Freedom Festival in India, and co-organising the Sex Worker Open University in London and Glasgow (Sex Worker Open University, 2013; x:talk, 2009b, 2010b, 2010c, 2013), the activists involved in x:talk have also organised a demonstration and action in March 2009, in order to protest against the 2009 Policing and Crime Bill, which threatened (and unfortunately managed) to further criminalise and destabilise migrant sex workers (x:talk, 2009a; Haste, 2009). In that occasion, sex workers and allies spoke and made themselves visible around London's Piccadilly Circus Eros Fountain, and then took to the streets to block the traffic while carrying a banner saying: "Sex Workers Are Stopping the Traffic", parodying and challenging the measures taken up by the UK government which are meant to 'save the trafficked victims' or 'challenging organised crime', but instead contribute to making all migrant sex workers more vulnerable to deportation and exploitation, and serve as reinforcing security devices (Anderson & Andrijasevic, 2008; Andrijasevic, 2010; Aradau, 2008; Mai, 2011).

This demonstration can be easily read as a moment of clear visibility and claims to rights, where sex workers took to the streets of the centre of London, spoke loudly for

⁵⁵ CAWN asked for our contribution to their report 'Exploitation and Trafficking of Women: Critiquing Narratives during the London Olympics'. Mainstream media such as BBC, The Guardian, Channel 4 as well as international TV and Newspapers are often asking for contributions, unfortunately mostly proving invasive attempts to film 'real migrant sex workers'. The Home Office contacted x:talk in 2012 to ask us to attend the Prostitution Effective Practice Events and give our inputs. We sent a document with our positions, it is to us however unknown the extent to which it would have been taken into consideration. This information is in my knowledge as I am one of the email contact persons for the group.

their rights, were filmed and got in the local press (Haste, 2009). This was a clear case of victimised outsiders claiming their position and raising their voices, and in so doing: enacting citizenship. The sex workers indeed enacted their rights to protest and be visible in the centre of the city, and used a new language in a provoking and active way by 'stopping the traffic' in one of the busiest streets, disrupting their general image as victims of trafficking. Although the measure unfortunately went through, this demonstration presents us with a very good example of the outcomes that the dialogue and communication made alive in the x:talk classes may bring to.

The establishment and continuation of x:talk as an act of citizenship

As seen so far, x:talk is not a single act of citizenship, nor only a site for more traditionally outspoken rights claims enactments such as the demonstration above. The very establishment of x:talk as language classes for migrant sex workers, and its provision of a safe space to socialise amongst sex workers, defying the stigma and isolation structural to our jobs and facilitating dialogue and exchange, proves alone as a disruptive act of citizenship.

First of all, the classes are a site where a twofold new political subjectivity emerges. On the one hand, in a context where language works as a filter to define who has the right to be a citizen-subject, the fact that undesirable and excluded migrants such as (undocumented) sex workers take up the position of learning subjects disrupts scripted conceptions of citizenship as membership and integration, metaphorically bringing those marginalised subjects to the centre as subjects with the right to speak, and to claim rights, i.e. challenging their very exclusion. On the other hand, the sex workers activists involved in giving and organising the classes can be seen as subjects taking up the role of the state in delivering language classes whilst actively challenging citizenship by

questioning and transforming a language integration into a multiple language of socialisation, mobilisation, of claims to rights and to work in better conditions.

Secondly, x:talk provides a safe space to socialise and get together with other sex workers, inside as well as outside of class. Indeed, students and teachers are sometimes meeting after class in a bar or in the very same space at other times for “x:meet: a sex worker social space”, basically a space for drinking and chatting with each other (x:talk, 2011b). Providing such space for sociality where our work can be talked about with other, diverse sex workers rather than hidden and silenced as in most other social occasions, proves crucial in a threefold way. It challenges the structural isolation of sex workers given by their criminalisation; it further fosters dialogue to lead and take into unknown directions; and it contributes to the disruption of divisions amongst differently positioned sex workers, division that I will argue to be structural to the state management of citizenship and to the maintenance of social order.

The act of organising language classes (and social events) which are attended and led by sex workers from different backgrounds, is a transformative act of citizenship through dialogic politics. The classes indeed foster dialogue, challenging isolation and the dualistic oppositions between migrant and non-migrant sex workers; between those who have access to better and safer jobs because of their language skills, their documents and their skin colour and those who do not have access to many other jobs and are therefore more easily exploited; between those who are seen as privileged workers who have 'free choice' and do not represent the reality of the sex industry and those who are silenced, as mere victims of traffickers and patriarchy (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998). Such opposition is indeed functional to the rhetoric which seeks to deny agency to migrant sex workers (and often to sex workers in general) by understanding prostitution per se as violence against women rather than as labour (Jeffreys, 2008).

Also, entrenched with the political category of the 'victim of trafficking' and of trafficking as 'organised crime', this opposition is the result of a politics of both

criminalisation of sex work and of control and management of migration, security and European citizenship (Anderson & Andrijasevic, 2008; Andrijasevic, 2010; Aradau, 2008; Mai, 2011). Through these politics, it is the very state which produces the work niches which exploit but also sustain migrant sex workers in their migratory projects, through restricting their work and mobility rights (thus leaving only illegal, more precarious and vulnerable alternatives for both), whilst driving undocumented workers to the bottom of an illegal but functional industry (Andrijasevic & Anderson, 2009). Andrijasevic further shows how, the very organisation of a complex European citizenship, which is not anymore understandable in clear cut terms of inclusion/exclusion,⁵⁶ is gendered and sexualised through the stratification of labour in informal and illegalised sectors such as the sex industry (Andrijasevic, 2010, p. 11).

Within this context, other work has shown the defiance of logics of exclusion by sex workers enacting European citizenship claiming mobility and workers rights (Andrijasevic, Aradau, Huysmans, & Squire, 2012). The specific contribution to such defiance within the set up and maintenance of x:talk lies in its fragile but reinvented bridging and challenging, through the dialogical collective process of organising and giving language classes, the divides amongst sex workers which serve to cover the existent subjectivity and agency of migrants sex workers.

The act of making dialogue possible, through the development of a common language between diversely positioned sex workers which then mobilise together for claiming rights against a commonly shared stigma and differently wide-ranging criminalisation, is central to the constitution, through such language, of new political subjectivities enacting citizenship from the margins. This is not to say that x:talk is blind to different positioning – though it is not exempt from risking to reproduce hierarchies and domination through oppressive language⁵⁷. Rather, it is to say that by its being a

⁵⁶ I refer to the differentiations of access to the right to citizenship between new and old EU countries, as well as to the stratification amongst different status migrants, and to the gendered campaigns to reorient non-EU women to the realm of the home to discourage them from migrating (Andrijasevic, 2010, p. 9).

⁵⁷ See, for example, the episode reported in the introduction to this thesis where in a x:talk class a teacher used

political class fostering dialogue and collective mobilisation, it challenges discourses that divide sex workers in victims and whores, or in emancipated western high class hookers and doomed migrants in need to be rescued from traffickers (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998). In so doing, and through its fragile but existing presence and voice, it originally contributes to the constitution of (migrant) sex workers as actors of citizenship.

To conclude this brief analysis of x:talk as act(s) of citizenship I would like to return to the importance of multiplicity, fragility and dialogism. I have read these classes as a site of transformative citizenship where different acts of citizenship take place, starting from what happens within the classes, to actions that take place around and through the project and finally, to its establishment. All of the work of x:talk is however a work in process. The acts that take place are moments, that through being read and singled out as acts of citizenship contribute to articulate and bring forward the politicality of new subjects of rights, in this case migrant sex workers. However, the political importance of these acts is also and primarily in the way that they open up dialogues whose outcome cannot be predicted but who can also not be reduced to a moment. Enacting citizenship as a political concept and analytical, interpretative tool is to be seen as allowing to read important moments in the making of politics and citizenship not only as clear cut, unequivocal events, but also as messy and fragile starting points, from which transformative politics can follow in unknown ways.

Another good example of this is given by the Asociación de Sin Papeles in Madrid, where a similar variety of enactments can be read, with a messy and fragile whilst disruptive character.

and taught a specific language indirectly supporting the position of the government.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Asociación de Sin Papeles in Madrid is part of the Spanish-wide Network Oficina de Derechos Sociales and of the Madrid Network 'Ferrocarril Clandestino', network of associations and social centres fighting and working for migrant rights. This network meets fortnightly and comprises a big number of associations and social centres also providing Spanish classes: these include Patio Maravillas, Seco, Biblio, and Tabacalera. In this research, my attention has concentrated however on the classes given by the Asociación de Sin Papeles in Madrid. This is a grassroots organisation of migrant rights activists including undocumented migrants from the Sub-Saharan region and allies, which struggles against racism and discrimination and provides a space of intercultural get-together, to share experiences, and organise against a legal system that criminalises and normalises oppression; against the racist raids which chase and menace people with and without papers; against the existence of detention centres for migrants; and generally against the criminalisation and stigmatisation of migrants (C., 2011). The association started in 2008 as a small group of legal aid primarily concerned with the situation of Sub-Saharan street sellers and it grew to have different working groups: legal, theatre, self-education, sports, dance, and Spanish classes. Street-selling, i.e. selling CD's, DVD's and other goods on the streets is a very common occupation for undocumented migrants in Spain. Until 2009 it was strongly criminalised, and if caught, street sellers could get up to 2 years of prison, apart from risking deportation afterwards, if found without papers. Street sellers display their goods usually on a light rug, which can be rolled up quickly and lifted in case police show up. It is from these rugs ('mantas' in Spanish) that street sellers got the name of *manteros* (which roughly translates into: 'ruggers'). Most of the migrants involved in the ASP work as *manteros* (C., 2011). The situation of the *Sin Papeles* (i.e.

without papers) in Spain is quite specific. The state does not have the money or resources to keep them in detention centres, which are mostly full. The police raids against non-white non-European looking people result in the arrests and fines of people found without papers, and eventually in their deportation. The Asociación de Sin Papeles is based in a particular area of the centre of Madrid, Lavapiès, where many migrants live, and where there is a long history of social movements, social centres and social projects. This area is small enough to allow the daily contact with the people living and working there and its life revolves around socialising spaces like bars, squares and social centres. Lavapiès is also one of the areas with the highest number of racist police raids. It is in this environment that the Asociación formed, in response to the raids and criminalisation, and facilitated by the location and social spaces of the area (C., 2011).

The Spanish classes ran from 2008 until 2012, and were one important part of the Asociación de Sin Papeles, fostering common projects, cultural exchanges and of course, increasing the communication amongst the members of the Asociación. They grew from a need felt amongst the already existing members of the ASP, who expressed their wish to improve their Spanish.

Like x:talk, these classes started because of a felt need in a criminalised sector, in this case street selling. However, an important differentiation is to be made: in x:talk, the classes were organised by politicised migrant and non migrant sex workers who were in a privileged position of being able to speak the national language and who wanted to foster communication and organise together with other migrant sex workers. It was around the classes that x:talk came about as organisation, and the students who participated in it were not previously members of the projects. In the case of the ASP's Spanish classes it was the migrant members of the ASP themselves who demanded them, for themselves. Therefore, some of the Spanish members started these classes, teaching them on a volunteer basis (the ASP gets no funding) twice a week.

The classes were of course open to all, not only to the already members of ASP, and did attract more people into the Asociación, who got in touch with it through attending the lessons. Yet, I would like to consider the way that the classes emerged as a specificity of the first act of citizenship that I am going to consider: the very act of setting up the class. In this case, organised undocumented migrants clearly engaged in enacting their right to have the right to stay, work and learn the language by demanding and setting up language classes for themselves, together with their allies in struggle.

Even though Spain does not (yet) enforce language classes or tests, it is on the agenda of the right wings parties and national language knowledge remains one main mechanism of hierarchisation in society, whilst discourse on language and integration are also rife (Carabaña, 2004; Europa Press, 2013; Vigers & Mar-Molinero, 2009). Actually, because of the economic crisis and lack of funding, the few classes that were offered and subsidised by the *Comunidad de Madrid* (the Council of Madrid), decreased incredibly in number since 2009. After 2009, only very few classes by non-profit organisations were still being offered in the capital (A., 2013). In this context, the act of demanding and organising Spanish classes, specifically by and for undocumented migrants can be seen as an act of citizenship in which rights are not only demanded, but also taken. The right to be in the country is linked to the right to be able to communicate, in order to live and work and, most importantly, to articulate one's political demands and enact ones' political subjectivity as claimant of such rights. Within the very association, learning the language would mean having more scope to express oneself and to be able to fully participate in assemblies and discussions. Through the very setting up of these classes, undocumented migrants demonstrated and enacted their righteous presence, disrupting and challenging the very logic of exclusionary citizenship. Furthermore, the establishment of these classes brought more people in the Asociación, and fostered its internal communication and exchange.

Turning to the internal dynamics of the classes, to the dialogues taking place, and to the interaction between students and teachers is another important analytical moment, as it unveils another messy and fragile area of enactment of citizenship. The classes themselves were a site of enactment of citizenship, similarly to x:talk and to Worldword, because of the very language taught and the way it was taught. More similarly to Worldword than to x:talk, in these classes the material used was nearly always of political content, ranging from campaigns of the Asociación, news articles, informative materials about the so called Spanish Revolution of 15 May 2011 (also known as 15M) (Morán, 2013), as well as materials about stories of successful migratory projects (to bring the moral up, one teacher, M. told me) (C., 2011; K., 2011; M., 2011). During the summer of 2012, when the so-called *indignados* occupied again the squares of Madrid, some of the classes took place in these very squares, and consisted of listening and understanding the assemblies, to talk about the language used and needed afterwards (A., 2013).

Also, material was used that came from common projects, like the one I was lucky to witness during my distant observation in the classes in the summer of 2011. At the end of May 2011, the class was collectively organising a performance for the end of term and the beginning of the summer break, which then took place on June 1st. The performance consisted of showing a series of pictures that had been taken by students and teachers on a day out in Lavapiès. To each picture the students and teachers had written down a thought and a description, which was to be read in turn by one student or teacher at the time. The person who would read the script was not meant to be its author, but rather the whole project was a collective one. At the end of the slideshow/ spoken word, a song by Youssun D'our was to be also read aloud, in Wolof and Spanish, paragraph by paragraph, by each participant. The pictures ranged from street art, graffiti, to posters of shops, to a stop sign or posters with restaurant menus. These are some of the comments/scripts (all translated by myself from Spanish): “mestiza life in

Lavapiès”; “I like Turkish pizza, Kebab, Filled Aubergine”; “Elderly woman in the streets, she looks like she wants to say: don't you take my picture! There are many old people in Lavapiès, some of them don't like it when you block their path. My neighbour Carmen talks nice things with the migrants”; “(we all are) 'from the country and foreign” (sign referring to food sold in a shop); and (that is how it ended) “Borders. We are tired of borders, of being asked for papers, we want to travel, to go back to see our families, we are tired of seeing our friends deported, we want to be able to go to the disco without being asked for an ID, we want to jump in a car and drive. WE DON'T WANT ANY MORE BORDERS”. The performance took place in a bookstore in Lavapiès, and was well attended, about 100 people between friends and family of the students and general public.

This performance, with its polyglossic and heteroglossic messages is a multiple expression of presence, of interaction with neighbours, of daily life, of denouncements of injustice, of demands, and of rights claims. Criminalised people act here as literal actors of citizenship by taking up a public space for gaining visibility for their situation and their struggle, disrupting by so doing the logic that merely sees them as unlikely, excluded, criminalised and deportable. Its very public presentation, i.e. the dialogical moment towards Spanish neighbours, fellow activists and friends and family from the own community, contributes to reading this performance as part of the set of enactments of the rights to have rights⁵⁸ that stem from the ASP classes. The claims and messages were put together in dialogue, in a collective preparation amongst students and teachers, letting this new, diverse language of rights come to the fore.

During the classes I visited, interaction and dialogue were taking place that were clearly fostering the political expression and becoming of the students. The language learnt was

⁵⁸ The latest slogan of ODS, ASP and Ferrocarril Clandestino is indeed: “tenemos derecho a tener derechos!” (in English: “We have the rights to have rights!”) (Ferrocarril Clandestino, 2013; Ateneu Candela, 2013, my translation)

not only the language coming from the students, in a similar fashion to the Reflect radical pedagogy in ESOL in the UK (see Chapter 2), but it was also the language used in other political revindications, in an attempt to foster political alliances and collaboration. In the case of the 15M, the powerfulness of the ASP classes as enacting citizenship during their unfolding is clear. Through the classes the students were becoming knowledgeable about current political uprisings against the cuts, against governmental and party politics, for a different, horizontal and self-managed organisation. Hence, they were developing the skills to be able to understand and participate in assemblies, not to integrate in the current social order, but to link with other struggles in order to transform it.

And this, through the concomitance and cross-information (i.e. dialogue) about different struggles in the space of the centre of the city (Lavapiès is 1km away from the in May 2011 occupied Sol Square) did take place. For instance, after and through the 15M the issue of the police raids against migrants took much bigger resonance, many more people got involved in organising networks to inform and resist such raids, on Facebook, Twitter, but also in the very streets themselves. On July 5th 2011, for example, during a local assembly within the 15M in a square of Lavapiès, a migrant person was approached by police and was being harassed because he had no papers. Quickly some passers by alerted the nearby assembly, whose participants came along together with other neighbours to surround the police, forcing them to leave (Forneo, 2011). The influence of the struggle of the Sin Papeles on the 15M movement is not only important in terms of showing dialogue as alliance building across multiple struggles and languages of mobilisation, it also proves as another example of the political presence of unlikely subjects of rights that, by entering the political arena, engage in enacting and transforming citizenship.

However, as mentioned above, the ASP's classes were not exempt from problems,

which were given by the fragility of their existence in the current socio-political context and within gender, race and class power relations, all of which are reproduced in the indeterminacy and multiplicity of language itself.

When I talked to them in an informal situation in a bar after one class in May 2011, fellow activists, students and teachers were concerned with how to get more students involved in organising. One teacher, H. was saying that the jump to action did not depend on the context, she believed it to be depending on the person's predisposition to politics, where they were coming from, and that "it takes time to see the connection between the particular and the bigger picture" (H., 2011, my translation). Disagreeing with her, C. told her that it was not about that, but about "seeing the connection between action and objective" (C., 2011, my translation). A student, K., contested that "of course everyone has their own ideas, but what it is about here is gaining experience, the classes give you capacity through experience, this is why they are important" (K., 2011, my translation).

The crucial aspect arising from this dialogue is the different stakes. The two teachers were concerned with intentionality, asking whether it was possible to provoke action through pedagogy, and wondering what was the aspect that made it difficult (the need to see casual links, C., and to be able to analyse, H.). K., talking not only the activist's language but also the student's seemed to have exactly nailed the strength and limits of the project. Through language knowledge one gains 'experience'. I would argue that under experience learned in a language class comes communication, knowledge of each other, sociality, dialogue. On another note, C. also complained that more students would come to social events, like sport⁵⁹ or exhibitions than to class or political meetings. Instead of finding it a 'problem' per se, I would echo K. and see the enhancement of sociality as one important aspect of the politicality of ASP. Through the very act of socialising amongst manteros and other activists, the possible isolation and the logics of

⁵⁹ C. recounts of the organisation of a mini anti-racist Olympic games event, which was highly attended by students (C., 2011).

exclusion of undocumented migrants are challenged. Moreover, through sociality dialogue is pushed forward, probably as much as, if not even more than in a language class. The outcomes of the connections, exchanges, 'experiences' that may take place through language as dialogue in such events are as unpredictable as in a language class. The concern that people may develop or keep 'their own ideas' which would not translate into collective political work is both a risk and the condition of agency through and within language. If dialogue could not engender any sort of response, including none, it could also not engender transformative ones. If language was malleable at will in the current social reality, the power exerted through it from power positions would be far more difficult to disrupt from the margins.

'Experience' remains crucial for constituting subjectivity, and it is undoubtable that through the one of exchange, dialogue and communication, the actors of ASP got to come to the fore, enacting citizenship through their presence and claims and through influencing at the very least the politics of their own barrio.

Beyond the limits of engaging more students into the collective, issues of positionality also proved as limiting within this important and fragile project. The four teachers of ASP I spoke to (M., H., C. and A.) were aware of both the power of language and of possible hierarchies that could have emerged in the classes. As previously mentioned, the classes were taught by white, documented Spanish women, and the students were all black, undocumented men. When asking about the reason for the dissolution of the classes at the end of 2012, C. told me it was because of the lack of teachers (C., 2011). I then made contact with A., the last of the teachers involved in the project. A. told me she had to leave the classes because she was not feeling comfortable anymore around the students, who had taken to make daily advances on her. She also distanced herself from the organisation, having the critique that its composition was gender and race-wise very problematic. Likewise the Spanish classes, the whole Asociación is apparently

composed by white Spanish women and Sub-Saharan undocumented men. A. said she felt it was the reproduction of “the white mamas and the black boys” (A., 2013, my translation). While other teachers recognised the problem, they pointed at the difficulty they had trying to involve more female students and activists. They did also think of organising a women only class, which never took place, however (C., 2011). The lack of resources to find more teachers, the gender norms that reproduce politics as a masculine realm, the problematic power, class, gender and race dynamics between white women and black men were the reasons why the classes stopped. This is one result of the fragility of a project embedded in the dominant order, and it fits into the unpredictability of what consequences new dialogues and communications can have. Because of the same reason however, even if the classes have stopped, it is impossible to predict where the started political dialogue, and the multiple enactments within the project will take.

I would like to conclude this analysis of ASP with an important, also 'more traditional' act of citizenship that emerged from it. In 2008, the *manteros* involved in the *Asociación* (amongst them, the students of the classes) started organising together with other activists against the penal criminalisation of their work. The campaign they organised included writing demands of decriminalisation, petitions signed by 20,000 people, concerts, and a big demonstration in Madrid on 12th February 2009. During the demonstration, street sellers and supporters covered the streets of the centre of Madrid with rugs, and made themselves visible as taking the space to claim their rights to work (OtroMadrid, 2009). Street selling was degraded from penal to civil offence in April 2009. Since then, if caught with less than 400 euros, street sellers 'only' have a fine to pay, instead of 2 years of jail (El Pais, 2010).

Regardless of the success of the mobilisation, the demonstration is an exemplary moment of enactment of citizenship by excluded figures, involving, in similar fashion to the sex workers stopping the traffic, actively taking on a space in the centre of the city.

While it is not predictable in what ways the struggle will carry on, it is clear that in these cases, dialogue and communication have contributed and allowed raising voices and claims to right, and within this, they have enabled fragile, disruptive and complex enactments of citizenship by new political subjects, that the state attempts to exclude.

Language classes and dynamic, fragile enactments of citizenship from the margins

This chapter has been a journey through three different and unique sites of language teaching, mobilisation, and enactments. I started with an analysis of language and dialogue as potentially fostering the enactment of citizenship within language and language classes regardless of their intentional political agendas, because of the indeterminacy and multiplicity of the dialogue made possible. I argued that such indeterminacy meant the impossibility and counterproductivity of ruling out the emergence of political subjectivity from the margin even from within an official language class.

Being the focus of this research the possibility of change by marginalised subjects, I also contended that I was not making an argument for their inclusion into existing language teaching regimes, or for a relativistic analysis of the power of language as completely independent from its sites.

By locating the potential of transformation and agency in dialogue as condition for politicality through language, I attempted to read how such transformation would happen from the margins, reinscribing the latter as central to the making of citizenship, taking as example the very dialogical and fragile politics of the three projects of Worldword, x:talk and Asociación de Sin Papeles.

The politicality of these language classes translated into a reading of three diverse, dynamic sites of citizenship as transformation, which in turn saw the illustration of three

different, fragile and dynamic sets of acts of citizenship from the margins.

The unique contribution of each of these projects can be summarised as follows. Worldword represents a strong case against the sustenance of inclusion/exclusion paradigms, showing that even official classes can be accessed by those who are sought to be excluded per definition. Its political dialogical classes proved as a fragile site in which despite and because of the difficulties given by the different positionalities of the subjects involved (white German teachers, white EU students, and PoC undocumented migrant students), by the non-reflected reproduction of hurtful and oppressive language, and by the limits imposed from state funding, citizenship was being enacted.

I read the following as acts of citizenship stemming from Worldword: its very set up; the political praxis, connections and disrupting actions arising from the dialogical exchange of information through discussion in class; and the doubly disruptive (of citizenship as membership through their marginal positioning; and of the Worldword project itself) decision of setting up a different class by two disappointed students.

x:talk also works as a unique site of citizenship. The very fragile and stigmatised position of the subjects involved in organising and taking part in its classes, together with their internal, power-laden diversity make the disruptive potential of the dialogue that takes place through x:talk. In this sense, the fragile contestation, negotiation and redefinition of (standards of) sex work in class through the creation of new common languages; the mobilisation of migrant sex workers to protest against laws that silence and criminalise them; as well as the very setting up and organisation of language classes by and for sex workers are what composes x:talk's dynamic set of acts of citizenship. Dialogue between sex workers and by sex workers is also here what makes these acts possible, whilst its fragility is condition of the transformative power of sex workers acting as citizens, by organising with each other, speaking out and claiming rights.

Asociación de Sin Papeles' own and unique dynamic set of acts of citizenship comprise the very act of claiming and appropriation, by undocumented street sellers, of the right

to learn the language and to participate in the life of the city; the cross-cutting dialogues, alliances and political participation within current transformative movements such as 15M that resulted in another example of the political presence of so called excluded subjects; and the more traditional act of collective mobilisation for the decriminalisation of street-selling.

Asociación de Sin Papeles shares with Worldword the fragility and dangers of organising across different, hierarchically organised social positionalities (in this case a collective of black undocumented students becoming the students of white Spanish women); with x:talk the fragility and potential of the marginalised social positioning from which to speak, self-organise and act, and with both Worldword and x:talk the fragility of a political project organised around language. The enactments of all of these projects are powerful because of their very contingency and fragility; because of the indeterminacy and possible interruption of dialogue; and because of the importance of providing a space to socialise and further push unpredictable dialogues.

The fragility and potential of dialogue conveys a crucial message for transformative politics in general: though impossible to control, it is nonetheless important to attempt to use language and acts for enhancing dialogue, rather than blocking it. This means a constant reflection on positionalities, on one's own and the other's language, and even, at times, being prepared to shut up and let the dialogue carry on without us.

The examples given by these three projects have been fruitfully analysed through theories of language and political agency provided by Isin and Bakhtin, whilst contributing to new joint readings of those through functioning as practical and analytical precedents. They have filled in the gap left by the literature on language policies and citizenship analysed in Chapter 1, bringing in the power of language, the importance of language teaching and the very agency, resistance and transformation of

language and citizenship by the migrants affected by such policies. They have shown the importance, potential as well as the limits of specific methodologies, helping to shift the focus from scripted, fixed agendas for transformation onto the unpredictability of politics through language, dialogue and transformation, whilst using acts of citizenship in order to nail the political in them. Indeed, this analysis of x:talk, ASP and Worldword has indicated how radical methodologies that are centred on promoting and enhancing dialogue and expression rather than indoctrination, do contribute to creating a possible context for transformative politics, without being the only recipe for it.

Although the language classes considered differ from each other in terms of authorisation, of subjects involved, of national context, of pedagogies and mobilisation, they are all pointing to how both language and enactment are open ended, fragile yet powerful means to interpret and possibly change the order of things. Language has proven as a means of communication amongst students and activists, it has proven as possibly empowering *and* oppressive, as mediating, allowing and complicating the enactment of citizenship through the possibilities given by dialogue. Important is to remember that the dialogue is not to be fixed and isolated in time, and the use of acts of citizenship to analyse its politicality does and should not do so. All acts of citizenship narrated in here have an open-ended resonance and consequences, but the use of enactment allows for their reading as disruptions of dominant understandings of citizenship and politics in the now and then. In other words, language and dialogue allow to see the indeterminate, fragile and interactive character of politics, and enactment allows to understand, analyse and locate the political, disruptive and transformative within language and communication.

Conclusions

Bringing together, in dialogue with each other, different theoretical fields and different empirical political projects and experiences has been one major challenge for this work. Initially driven by my own experience of activism with language, migration and sex work, I embarked on a project that explored four main interconnected areas of research and theory: language policies on migration; radical pedagogies, language and agency, and acts of citizenship. Following a dialogical approach, I asked, in each of these fields, questions related to the experience of migrants' mobilisation from the margins, through language. Confronting, comparing and making different answers (or lack thereof) talk to each other I ended up constructing a theory of language, agency, citizenship and transformation which resulted in the analysis and presentation of the work of projects like x:talk, Worldword and ASP as dynamic, fragile yet transformative acts of citizenship.

The main achievement of this thesis is then the analysis, through an open, dialogical approach, of how transformation of citizenship from the margins occurs within language and language classes, without falling into binary conclusions that would oppose oppressive to transformative language, or official to alternative classes, whilst providing the tools to indicate how to foster change (through encouraging dialogue and communication) without denying different power positions and without limiting the possibility of change to a specific pedagogical or political model.

The research started from the existing conceptualisation of the relation between citizenship and language as currently governed by language tests. It then went to engage in complexifying such understanding, unveiling language's crucial role in the making and transformation of citizenship as political subjectivity, beyond its mere use as instrument of exclusion.

This work also aimed to contribute to the above mentioned areas of research it conversed with. Before spelling out and summing up the theoretical implications of this project for each area, I will briefly revisit the development of my arguments chapter by chapter, by following the aforementioned questions on mobilisation from the margins, through language as a thread.

Summarising the chapters

Given that my initial (and thenceforth constant) theoretical preoccupation was about the ways that language influences and interacts with migrants' lives in the context I live and work in, the first obvious step for me to take was to enquire into existing migration policies that had language in its foreground, that is, naturalisation and entrance language tests within EU countries.

In line with the main question of the thesis – transformation from the margins – I focused on the quite extensive literature criticising entry tests from a variety of points of view. The tests were criticised for reproducing ideologies of national belonging and identity, through reproducing a mythical language unity as the common denominator of the imagined national community (Blommaert, 2006; Milani, 2008; Piller, 2001). They were criticised for being exclusionary rather than fostering social cohesion. As there would always be someone failing them; they did not apply to people speaking different EU languages; and they would unavoidably favour western educated, more well off migrants (Blackledge & Wright, 2010; Jacobs & Rea, 2007; Wodak, 2010). Finally, the

testing system was also seen to reproduce hierarchies between superior and inferior cultures, by means of dividing between more and less valuable languages, those to be tested and those not to be (Blackledge & Wright, 2010; Kochenov, 2011; Van Avermaet, 2009). The literature dealt with in the first chapter could however not respond to my need to account for migrants' agency and transformation through language: migrants themselves as resisting subjects to these measures were indeed completely absent, together with the mentioning of language classes as further migration controlling measures.

Subsequently, in Chapter 2, I looked at the literature that dealt with language classes to migrants from the point of view of radical and critical pedagogies. The aim was to add an understanding of the transformative possibilities of teaching, and in particular language teaching. While the literature on exclusion brings out important aspects of the discriminatory dimensions of requiring language tests, and language teaching more generally, they did not provide much understanding of how language classes and teaching can be approached from a more transformative perspective. The first part of the chapter analysed the oppressive work of language through official language classes, pointing at how it reproduces differences between good citizens and migrant others and delegitimises those working in informal industries by omitting the language needed in these jobs. Analysing how language classes engage in the reproduction of dominant social order and how language tests work as oppressive measures were both crucial to my project. This was indeed no attempt to account for migrants' agency through language by assuming its possibility. I therefore dedicated much analytical weight to the oppressive work of power and domination across governmental measures and at existing power relations amongst differently positioned subjects.

The second part of the second chapter moved to a literature that dealt with the possibility of social change and challenge of power relations through specific radical and critical pedagogies mainly centred on the experiences of oppression of the students

and seeking equality between teacher and students. While it importantly addressed the possibility of change through language teaching, I found that this literature had the tendency to assume such possibility by restricting its focus on specific transformative methodologies, and by lacking a proper engagement with the multiple workings of language and power. In order to enquire into how migrants can transform citizenship through language from the margins, it seemed crucial to thoroughly explore exactly the power of language itself and of the conditions for agency through it.

I resolved this point in the fourth chapter, after having filled in another important gap in most work on critical pedagogies (with the important exception of the work of English for Action) and in language testing literatures. In Chapter 3 I indeed explored the issue of actual provision of and accessibility to language classes in the countries this research focussed on, i.e. the UK, Germany and Spain. One clear common trait of the in other aspects quite different scenarios of official language teaching was that the state did not provide any subsidised classes for migrants not already holding papers or not on their path to legally obtain them. Marginalised, un-documented migrants seemed to be once again absent from the scene.

Challenging the reproduction of exclusionary thinking, I presented in this chapter the work of the projects that informed this research, x:talk, ASP (and in general here the network it is part of, Oficina de Derechos Sociales) and Worldword. x:talk being a sex worker led migrant sex workers rights workers' cooperative that teaches English in London to migrant sex workers and organises against the criminalisation of sex work and migration; OSD being a Network of different grass-root radical projects providing assistance and language classes to migrants, within which the Asociación de Sin Papeles of Madrid organised street-sellers without papers around a specific Spanish language programme running between 2006 and 2013; and finally Worldword being a left radical German language school come official, which offers both integration courses and provides free places for undocumented or precarious migrants, whilst keeping a political

engagement in anti-racism, migrants rights, anti-capitalism and anti-nationalism.

The fourth chapter emerged from the need to make sense of the politicality of these projects in relation to language and power, and, at the same time, to read existing theories on political agency through language in light of what these projects had to say. I started by tackling the dominant power of language through the theory of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 1991), which pointed at how official language is one expression of domination, and how domination is reproduced through it and through habitus. Yet, I was looking to make sense of the language taught by the three alternative projects. Such language, through its content (i.e. materials that aimed at challenging the stigmatisation of sex work and migration, and generally politically aware) proved difficult to be understood only in terms of domination. I therefore explored the Bourdiean concept of social and political change, finding an answer in what he called heterodoxa. Heterodoxic would be the alternative discourse, which engages in showing the arbitrariness of the assumed, unquestioned dominant doxa by exposing the orthodoxic forces that seek to maintain it. Heterodoxa could only be able to pursue change if the groups producing it were acknowledged as instituted within the wider social field. In other words, language could only hold the power to do things, to bring about resistance, through a process of authorisation. The opposition between hetero and orthodoxa proved problematic, while the example set by the three projects questioned the necessity of authorisation for political agency from the margins. This led me to look further for a theory that could account for unauthorised transformation and the power of language at the same time.

Here, Judith Butler's theory of language power and performativity brought in the important element of unauthorised disruption (Butler, 1997). Butler made sense of agency and of the possibility of resignification through the necessary yet unpredictable failures of repetition within language. This move suggested that the language taught in alternative classes could originate disruption and reappropriate and resignify hurtful

language. However, this possibility was, in Butler, depending on the working of language itself. Her theory turned out not suitable for understanding agency within the political role and function of alternative language classes in particular, and political change and transformation from the margin through language in general.

The problem was identified in both Butler's and Bourdieu's monolingualism, that is, in the way they presented language in unitary terms (either as dominant or alternative in Bourdieu, and as pervasive, though fallible for Butler). The experiences of the projects showed the presence of a multiplicity of language, both in terms of the different languages taught, and in terms of language as metaphoric. Multiple national languages were used in class, together with different languages to the official one: languages of rights, of bonding at work, of resignification etc., while in general, each language proved internally diverse, entailing elements of domination and transformation at the same time.

The philosopher that came in at this stage was Mikhail Bakhtin, with his understanding of language as multiple and dialogic (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981; Bakhtin & Volochinov, 1977). Bakhtin showed that the reproduction of domination through language depends on forces trying to make it look unitary, and to mask its multiplicity. Bakhtin argued for the multiplicity of language, both in terms of the simultaneous existence of many languages (polyglossia) and their internal diversity (heteroglossia). Through such understanding, the work of alternative language classes, in their fragile juggle between reproduction, change and resignification, was being made better sense of. The multiplicity of language was though not the only contribution of Bakhtin's theory to this research: saying that language contains both oppressive and transformative elements would still not indicate how change takes place. It was indeed through Bakhtin's theory of dialogue that transformation was explained. Transformation lies in the open, infinite possibilities of responses by the interlocutor of a dialogue, whose unpredictable outcomes did not depend on the positionality of either speakers. Because of the

unpredictability of the results of dialogue regardless of the speaker, the possibility of transformation and agency from the margins was being accounted for. The next step was showing language as intrinsically about dialogue and finding how the centrality of the latter was an important aspect of the alternative language projects.

Dialogism did the work of explaining the possibility of change, yet how to account for the political within the dialogical, or how to analyse when transformation is possible also from unauthorised, marginal positions, remained vague. Therefore, in Chapter 5, I went back to citizenship in order to move on to identifying when and how change from the margins, through dialogue, can and does happen. For this sake, I referred to the work of Engin Isin (Isin, 2002; Isin & Nielsen, 2008), who importantly pointed out the importance of seeing citizenship not in mere terms of membership in which to be included or excluded (like the literature on language testing tended to do), but as a struggled terrain, as enacted and transformed by those who are meant to be excluded, through their disruptive claims to rights.

At this stage, the dualistic vision of citizenship as either empowerment (once gained) or oppression (because of its exclusivity) was challenged, by showing how citizenship is to be thought beyond the binary of inclusion/exclusion, but as process in the making. Through Isin, I indeed went to challenge the logics of exclusion that want to deny agency and political subjectivity to those who are seen as non-citizens (in this case undocumented migrants), by pointing out how they are central to the very making of citizenship, rather than successfully excluded by it.

Then, I went to analyse the moments of disruption in which citizenship as dominant device is challenged – what Isin calls acts of citizenship. It is through those that people not holding rights constitute themselves as political subjects by enacting their claims to hold rights, and in so doing challenging the logics of exclusion that want to present such rights as unthinkable. At this stage, I pointed out an important aspect of acts of citizenship: in order to become such, actions have to be read as acts. Actions happen, in

other words, through a dialogical moment in which not the intention of the doer(s) but the response of the reader (which in turn does not have to be authorised to do so) is what leads to disruption and transformation. Through enactment, transformation from the margins is not only possible, but is what disrupts and challenges the exclusionary order of exclusion/inclusion.

In the moment of such enactments, new sites for the making of citizenship emerge, which are not necessarily the usual suspects of voting stalls or parliament, but can include streets and squares, occupied buildings, international courts, and, through the realisation of the centrality of dialogue (my contribution) also language and language classes. Before dealing with language classes as sites of citizenship in the last chapter, I concluded Chapter 5 with a theoretical move that brings together the understanding of change as enacted and as taking place through dialogue. It allowed for seeing language itself, in its metaphorical sense, as a site of citizenship from which the latter gets transformed by non-authorised subjects, rather than merely reproduced as exclusionary membership.

The final chapter of this thesis was where the challenge of a dualistic understanding of language classes as sites of maintenance of citizenship as membership or as sites of transformation took place. Through an understanding of language as dialogical and multiple; of its power as simultaneously oppressive and transformative; of citizenship as enacted through dialogical acts rather than as power to be gained by inclusion; and ultimately of language as site of citizenship itself, any setting in which dialogue, with its unexpected results, is taking place can be seen as a potential site of citizenship. In this sense, I argued, even in official language classes there could be dialogical moments that through unexpected alliances and communications would lead to the political becoming of students and to their constitution as subjects through possible acts of citizenship.

However, contesting dualistic oppositions did not mean to state that there is no difference between official and alternative language classes or amongst different ones of

each. On the contrary, the rest of Chapter 6 was intended to enquire into how, by fostering political dialogue, alternative language classes do work as sites of enactment of citizenship, however fragile they are in their successes. In other words, I argued here how even without the possibility of intentionally disrupting, and because of the potential for disruption across different communicative settings, some sites, through their dialogical political work are more likely than others to become sites of transformation.

One example of this was set by Worldword, which, through its political practice proved how the inclusion/exclusion paradigm can and does fail. At the same time Worldword's very establishment was read as an act of citizenship, which saw an official class subsidised by the state and aimed at 'integrating' and producing the good migrant/citizen being turned into a site of critique of governmental measures, and being accessible to those least meant to be in it: undocumented migrants.

x:talk and ASP proved instead sites of a varied and fragile set of acts of citizenship. These include: their establishment, as classes specifically meant to teach to undesirables and unthinkable citizens such as undocumented migrant sex workers and street-sellers; their use of dialogue in class, that brought reformulations of political identities within illegalised industries (especially in x:talk, regarding the identity of 'sex workers'); the new alliances, new solidarities and political collaborations that took place that brought to expanding the way of doing politics (as in the participation of ASP students/activists in the 15M and vice versa, or as in the moments of bonding around problem solving and sharing strategies to counter oppressive bosses in x:talk); and collective actions that showed those very undesirable migrants claiming their right to having their work and lives decriminalised (like the 'sex workers stopping the traffic' and the street-sellers demonstrations of 2009).

Finally, I argued that all of these acts are not to be seen as straightforward, always successful transformations, and that they do not work as templates for the enactment of citizenship through language. Instead, their fragility remains a condition for the very

potential provided by a dialogue that cannot be stopped once and for all, but towards whose flourishing one can, and should work, and reflect, in order to enhance it rather than inhibit it – which the work of these projects attempt to do (remaining liable to temporal failure).

This last chapter ultimately argued and demonstrated how, through dialogue and enactment, agency, change and transformation through language from the margins does take place. Through an open-ended, non-prescriptive reading of alternative language classes as sites and acts of citizenship, the relation between language, citizenship and political subjectivity got rewritten, showing the necessary interconnection amongst them.

2. The contributions of this research

I would now like to summarise the contributions of this research to the four fields of language policies on migration; of radical pedagogies, of language and agency, and of acts of citizenship.

To the research on language policies and migration, this research contributed by widening the scope of its analysis beyond language testing. This took place by looking into how in the EU (and specifically in the cases of Spain, Germany, and the UK) discourses of integration that ultimately serve for the construction and maintenance of the 'good' citizen and migrant, are also reflected in and reproduced through official language classes and through the very language taught itself. Another contribution, crucial to this project, is bringing in marginalised migrants' activism, mentioning the organisation of mobilisation in the UK against the spouse language test in 2010 and against the cuts of provision of ESOL, and of course, the existence of alternative language projects that challenge the reproductive and filtering aims of language policies. This point is strictly connected to another implication, also fundamental to this

research: the challenge of the common understanding, in the literature on language testing, of citizenship as mere status and habitus, rather than as enacted through claims to rights. In turn, this is reflected in their emphasis on inclusion and exclusion, which I have challenged as a dichotomy that attempts to hide and deny the possibility of change from the margins.

In sum, I have contributed to complexify the understanding of language and citizenship within this scholarship, and, most importantly, to overcome a binary focus on exclusion and not be blind to change from the margins.

The second area which this research sought to enhance whilst sharing many aspects with it is critical and radical pedagogies on language teaching. The literature considered was primarily concerned with the possibility of change through language classes which would follow a different pedagogy to the top-down, hierarchical traditional one. Maintaining a commitment to teaching methods and approaches which promote dialogue and seek to counter dominant power relations, this project argued for the problematisation of issues of language and power within this literature, which seemed to assume the possibility of agency and of overcoming different positionalities. In this respect, I showed how agency is not to be assumed and differences of power and positioning are impossible to be overcome at will or through following a specific pedagogical model. This research contributed to radical pedagogies not by introducing or arguing for a different or better teaching method, but by providing tools to analyse how change and transformation can happen in class and ways to methodologically favour these (though without guarantees of success). This is respectively through dialogue, and through enhancing the latter. Dialogue can happen in any context and its outcomes are unpredictable. It is therefore important not to dualistically oppose good and bad pedagogies. What is central is the acknowledgement of the increased likelihood for dialogue to lead to transformation in politically aware teaching sites such as x:talk, Worldword and ASP (whose potential lies also in their fragility).

The highlighted importance of not undervaluing or ignoring the power of language itself led me to enquire into theories that dealt with language and agency. From these, I developed an understanding of agency in language as being located in the possibility of changing its dominant terms through dialogue, because of its openness to change. This was not to mean that the positionality of the speakers or of the actors involved had to become irrelevant. On the contrary, marginality and positionality always influence and are reflected in the sometimes fragility of dialogue. However, they must not be seen as fixed as they cannot and do not determine the outcome of dialogue, i.e. possible change and transformation. The introduction of acts of citizenship for analysing exactly when political transformation from the margins took place through dialogue, further complexified and enhanced this understanding of political agency in language. Not only was agency through language from the margins possible, but marginality became central to the possibility of transformation through language. In this respect, this research contributed to the theories of language and agency by making sense of political agency through language as influenced but not determined by the positioning of the subject, and by arguing for the centrality of language for the very making and transformation of citizenship (as political subjectivity) from the margins.

Finally, Isin's framework of acts of citizenship was also reformulated to encompass the importance of language in the dialogical moment of reading the act. Through reading language as a site of citizenship, and alternative language classes as sites of dynamic, whereby fragile and messy acts of citizenship, this project has ultimately contributed to unravel the importance of language and dialogue to enactment. It opened up new ways of understanding acts in dialogical terms, which do not follow any predetermined template, and which resist drawing a clear separation between the given, dominant order and the disruptive act. Because of the unpredictability of language as dialogue, and its centrality for the epistemology of an act, transformation through acts is possible, but acts, as actions, will also always be open to different interpretations.

To let politics from the margins, the main focus of this research, throw in the last (but never last?) word, the work of x:talk, ASP and Worldword is here presented as examples of how marginalised voices can speak and are speaking, whilst the possibility of change lies in the unpredictable ways that these can and will be answered and responded to.

List of Interviews

For anonymity reasons the names of most interviewees are replaced with non corresponding initials. The location of some interviews is also omitted. I have the consent to quote all interviewees.

Interview with F. from La Casa Invisible, Malaga, Spain 06/05/2011

Interview with G. from Worldword, Germany 25/05/2011

Interview with H. from Asociación de Sin Papeles, Madrid, Spain 30/05/2011

Interview with K. from Asociación de Sin Papeles, Madrid, Spain 30/05/2011

Interview with M. from Asociación de Sin Papeles, Madrid, Spain 30/05/2011

Interview with C. from Asociación de Sin Papeles, Madrid, Spain 01/06/2011

Interview with T.&L. from Seco, Madrid, Spain, 04/06/2011

Interview with D. from Ateneu Candela, Terrassa (Barcelona), Spain 11/06/2011

Interview with Mg. from Worldword, Germany 08/07/2011

Interview with S. from Worldword, Germany 13/07/2011

Interview with A. from Asociación de Sin Papeles, Madrid, Spain 10/02/2013

Interview#2 with G. from Worldword, Germany, 08/08/2013

Interview [Skype] with Dermot Bryers from English for Action, London, UK,
01/09/2013

Interview with R. from Worldword, Germany, 05/09/2013

Interview with P. from Worldword, Germany, 06/09/2013

Participation and observation in organisations and projects

x:talk, London, UK. Since 2006, I have worked as organiser, coordinator, English teacher and teaching assistant. From February 2010 until May 2012 I was openly recording information and data from most areas of my work in x:talk for this project.

Worldword, Germany. Between May 2011 and September 2012, I observed five, four hour long German classes at this school, openly assisting for this PhD research. These took place on 23rd May 2011; 11th July 2011; 13th July 2011; 20th September 2012; 25th September 2012.

Asociación de Sin Papeles, Madrid, Spain. Between May and June 2011, I assisted to one class (28th May 2011), and attended one performance (1st June 2011).

La Casa Invisible, Malaga, Spain. On 6th June 2011 I attended one Spanish class.

Seco, Madrid, Spain. On 4th June 2011 I attended one Spanish class.

Ateneu Candela, Terrassa (Barcelona), Spain. On 11th June 2011 I attended a general meeting with approximately 30 people, of which around 15 members of the Asociación de Sin Papeles Terrassa, amongst which some students of the language classes. During the meeting I presented my research project.

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